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Rev.<sup>d</sup> William White.



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A  
COLLECTION  
OF  
TRACTS,  
PUBLISHED

Between the Years 1729 and 1759,  
IN THE  
DEFENCE and EXPLANATION  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY  
and its EVIDENCE.

By HENRY STEBBING, D. D.  
Late Chancellor of SARUM.

Improved and prepared for the Press by  
the AUTHOR, and now republished :

By HENRY STEBBING, D. D.  
Morning Preacher to the Hon. Society of  
GRAY'S INN.

L O N D O N :  
Printed for JOHN TOWNSEND, in London-street, Mark-lane.

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T H E  
E D I T O R ' s  
P R E F A C E.

**T**H E following Tracts are printed exactly as they came from the hand of the Author; who corrected them not long before he died, with an inclination that they should some time or other be republished. Had he lived longer, I have reason to believe he would have put them to the press himself. As they are tracts, which he wrote in defence and explanation of Christianity, he might think them a proper supplement to the two volumes which he has published on Practical Christianity.

These tracts have long since met with approbation : the Editor therefore is under no concern least the republication of them



should injure the character of the Author ; and hopes his own conduct will be safe from censure for having set about it.

The Author has given his reason for republishing and collecting them into one volume, which is, to save them from being lost : if the judgment of the Public agrees with the Author's judgment, as to the value of these tracts, the Editor presumes he may plead the same reason for sending them to the press, which the Author himself has alledged.

But the Editor has more to plead : which is, the duty and honour he owes his Father ; whose inclinations have with him the weight of commands ; in consequence of which he does not feel himself at liberty to omit what he knows his Father wished might be done ; or inclined to relinquish the satisfaction of discharging his duty to the memory of a Father, whose great example and paternal affection demand every testimony of filial observance and esteem, that can be paid him.

\* Yet, these being tracts of Controversy, and of a controversy laid aside, they may be thought unseasonable. Controversies them-



themselves indeed are occasional and temporary; yet what they contain may be of lasting use and value; and however justly it may be said of many controversies, that their use is as little as their duration, yet I apprehend this is not in general true of those controversies, wherein the truth and explanation of the Christian Religion is set forth and defended. Writings of this sort, if well performed, will be of use, when the controversy which produced them hath ceased, and will be valued, so long as there are those left who value Christianity.

Some of these Tracts contain the Controversy, which the Author had with the present BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER; the republication of which needs no apology: the Public will easily allow it to be a duty of natural and necessary Justice; and will permit them to be set forth *in their own vindication*. His Lordship, by repeated Editions of his writings, is frequently reminding the Public of the illiberal manner, in which he hath treated the Author; and it is a duty in the Author's friends to take some care, that *his* writings



may remind the Public how little he deserved such treatment.

A history of the Author's Life, which might claim a place in this preface, would hardly afford any entertainment to the Public; as his life was not distinguished by any remarkable events. His was a life of plain labour; and his works are the best history of him that can be given.

His talent for controversy set the Colour of his life. This gave him reputation at his first entrance upon the world, and determined the principal events he met with in it. This talent he applied in defending the Gospel of Christ, and the Church of England; jealous as he was of that Spirit, which, under a specious plea for Civil and Religious Liberty, threatened the credit of Christianity and of Government. He wrote in defence of Both with strict honesty, as well as great precision; nor is it wonderful, that he addicted himself with pleasure to a study, for which he felt he was well qualified, and in which he knew he was well employed.

Thus



Thus engaged, the Author constantly resided for about twenty years on his Livings in the Country ; where whilst he pursued his Polemical Study, he had the satisfaction of seeing his Pastoral Care prosper under his diligent Instruction and good Example ; and where he was happy in the pursuit of his Studies, and in the Love and Respect he met with from his Parishioners.

The Author's application to controversial writing furnished him with his abilities for the pulpit, and qualified him for a solid and instructive Preacher. Not that he ever *disputed*, but always *reasoned well*, in his sermons ; and the doctrines he explained with clearness, he enforced with earnestness. His hearers *felt*, as well as *understood*, what he preached. These abilities recommended him to the HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF GRAY'S INN, who chose him for their Morning Preacher : a promotion, which he always very highly valued ; not only for the duty of it, and for the honour with which it distinguished him, but for the very agreeable life he passed with the Gentlemen of that Society ; who after many years friendship



ship and respect shewn to the Author, gave a great testimony of their *affection* for him, when they were pleased to comply with his request for putting his Son in his place. —A request, which of all things lay nearest to the Author's heart; and the generous compliance with which his Son will always remember with gratitude and respect.

The Author met with Friendships like these, which both cheared and dignified his industrious course of Study. Among which, the affection he had for a late worthy Prelate, and the respect I owe his memory, call me to recollect the late DR. HAYTER, BISHOP OF LONDON: who justly held a place in the highest seats of Literature; where, as his Abilities gained him respect, so his Politeness prompted him to return it. His learned and liberal accomplishments were constantly productive of a candid and liberal behaviour; and shewed, that when the Scholar and the Gentleman meet in the same person, they form an Amiable character, and when they meet in a Bishop they form a Venerable one—In DR. HAYTER, the Scholar, the Gentleman and the Bishop conspired to shew us  
the



the greatest Character in his life, and to make us sensible of the greatest Loss in his untimely death !

The Author's writings procured him also the friendship of the late DR. SHERLOCK, BISHOP OF LONDON ; whose very eminent Character is above the reach of my weak Eulogium ; but whose signal regard for the Author demands this tribute of Gratitude and Respect to his memory, in thus recollecting That circumstance in the Author's life, from which he derived so ample a testimony of his merit.

The Author had the honour to be a Member of the same College in CAMBRIDGE with his Lordship ; and was Fellow of CATHERINE HALL, where his Lordship was afterwards Master. It was under that Great Man's inspection, that the Author took his first step into the business of the world, as his Curate at Therfield : a situation which, considering the abilities of DR. SHERLOCK and the disposition of the Author, must be esteemed a very advantageous one—thus to open the study of his profession with the acquaintance and conversation of One, who  
was



was the highest ornament of it. This advantage the Author valued and applied; and, during his continuance at Therfield, took an impression from the example he admired, which lasted through life; and which, though it fell short of the great original, served to distinguish the Author from other writers. Afterwards, when the part which the Author took in the Bangorian controversy brought him again within his Lordship's notice, it soon brought him within his friendship; and it was under his Patronage, that in the future progress of his life he became distinguished, and was first made ARCHDEACON OF WILTS, and afterwards CHANCELLOR OF SARUM. His Lordship gave a farther testimony of the opinion he had of the Author's merit and abilities, when he procured him the appointment for preaching the Lecture founded by the HONOURABLE ROBERT BOYLE; in which the Author laid out his maturest thoughts and most accurate study on the subject before him; and by the merit of the work fully answered the good opinion of his Patron, whilst at the same time he laid in a fair claim to the good opinion of Posterity.

His



His Lordship attempted to carry the Author higher in the world ; but—he failed in it.

It may be observed, that a talent for controversy, though it be of public utility, may work to the private detriment of those who are called to exercise it : and that however it may raise a Reputation, it hardly acquires Esteem ; which does not spring up in the thorny field of contradiction. A controversial defence of Religion and our Establishment, will be an offence to those who love neither ; will carry but little merit with those who care little about them ; and may give disgust to many who are friends to both ; who may not love *fighting men*, though they fight in a *good cause*.

Controversy hurts Friendship ; even among those who are engaged on the same side ; who, though they are United for the cause before them, yet are Rivals, for reputation at least, in their defence of it ; and the greater success any one gains against the adversary, the more formidable he becomes even among those of his own party.

This



This makes the Post of Controversy a dangerous Post of Duty ; when a good cause and good abilities call a man to a work, in which, besides the pains he takes, he hazards true friendship and esteem ; and gets perhaps as much Ill Will as he acquires Honour.

The Author never regarded the Hazard of this employment ; he considered nothing more than the Duty of it, and how he might best acquit himself in the discharge of it. This wholly filled his mind and employed his powers ; and left him no attention to the calls of Party, or of Ambition, or to those Affiduities before Great Men, which are the usual introduction to Preferment—No wonder then he did *not obtain*, what he did *not seek*. Yet, he once had reason to think the Royal Favour was moving towards him : but whether his enemies contrived to stop it, or private regards seduced his Friends to intercept it, is as little worth explanation now, as it was then worth the Author's concern. The discharge of his Duty satisfied his Conscience ; and the station in which Providence



dence thought fit to place him satisfied his Desires; which were moderate and humble: his HOPES he had always fixed on a higher scene of things; and never set his heart on Advancement here, so he might *be found in the number of those, whom God will reward when he cometh to judge the world.*

GRAY'S-INN,

March 2, 1766.

HENRY STEBBING.



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THE  
AUTHOR'S  
PREFACE.

I HAVE put these Tracts together to rescue them from the common fate of small pamphlets published separately. At the time when they were written, Christianity had been fiercely attacked, by its open, professed enemies ; and the clergy found themselves under a more than common call to exert themselves in it's defence. Many hands were employed in this work, and many excellent pieces were published which will be of lasting use. I challenge no more than my share in this common stock of merit, whatsoever it may be that the Public shall think I deserve.

The author of *the divine legation of Moses, &c.* may not, perhaps, like his Company ; but he has no right to complain.



I point not at the MAN as to his real internal character (of which I know nothing) but I censure his WORKS, which hurt the cause he endeavours to support. Whatever excuse such writers may be entitled to, their errors certainly deserve correction; for the mischief is the same, as the danger of an arrow or a cannon-ball is the same, whether it comes from the enemy with intention to destroy, or from the ill-pointed direction of a friend and ally.

In reprinting these pieces I have not followed the example of the author in cramming the margin of my book with *second thoughts*, commonly worse than the *first*. I have left them to rest upon their original strength, and my business has been to contract rather than to enlarge. To this purpose I have struck out several passages which I thought might well be spared; and the CONCLUSION of *the history of Abraham justified*, &c. which is for the most part personal, I have, in decency to his EPISCOPAL character (since acquired) entirely suppressed.

JUNE 2, 1761.

HENRY STEBBING.



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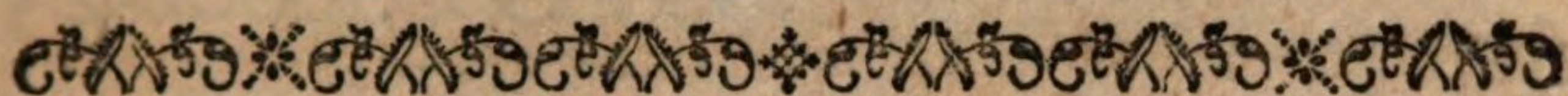
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O F T H E  
U S E and N E C E S S I T Y  
O F  
R E V E L A T I O N ;

Being a Defence of Dr. Clarke's  
Evidences of natural and revealed  
Religion, published in 1731 ; in  
Answer to the fourteenth Chapter  
of a Book, entitled, Christianity  
as old as the Creation, &c.





THE HISTORY OF THE

USE AND NCESSITY

OF A

RENEWAL

Being a Discourse of Dr. Clarke's  
Lectures of natural and revealed  
religion, published in 1731; in  
Answer to the fourth and fifth  
of a book, entitled, Christianity  
as old as the Creation, &c.

By





T H E  
P R E F A C E.

 AD Dr. Clarke been living, his abilities to defend what he has advanced upon the evidences of natural and revealed religion, were so well known, that probably he would not have been called to the tryal; but certainly I should have taken no share in his defence, who was alone more than equal to the undertaking. I had indeed no thoughts upon the first publication of Christianity as old as the Creation, &c. to interpose in justification of Dr. Clarke's principles; not doubting but some of the many advocates he had whilst living, and some of whom have appeared with zeal in



his defence since his death on points of less moment, would have undertaken this cause : but finding this part neglected, and nothing hitherto published, I was willing to contribute my mite towards doing justice to the memory of a great man ; especially since in the present case his credit is so closely connected with the true interest of both natural and revealed religion.

Upon perusing the book before mentioned, I found that the author had drawn up the whole strength of it in his fourteenth chapter, intended by him as a direct answer to so much of Dr. Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, as concerns the use and necessity of the Gospel Revelation : and thus far we are certainly obliged to him, that he has given us such an abstract of his own work, as perhaps nobody would have been at the pains to make for him, and saved those who are willing to come at things in the shortest way, the trouble of turning over a great many useless pages. He sets out with telling us, that in engaging with Dr.

Clarke



Clarke, he engages with \* “an author who usually exhausts the subject he writes on, and, we may well imagine, has omitted nothing that makes for his purpose.” But these and some other good words, which he is sometimes willing to bestow upon the doctor, are but an artifice to insinuate that Christianity is incapable of any just defence, and to make himself appear the more considerable whilst he is opposing him. I envy not the Deists any advantage they can borrow from the repute of this writer; but it is just that every man should have his due, and that the world should be made sensible, whether Christianity or infidelity has found the more able advocate.

It is very certain, that in the general defence of the Gospel, none have laboured with greater success than Dr. Clarke; and perhaps it will not be easy to find his equal. He has indeed, as the objector says, exhausted the subject; and therefore the reader must not expect any new arguments, but the old ones only, explained

\* Page 353.

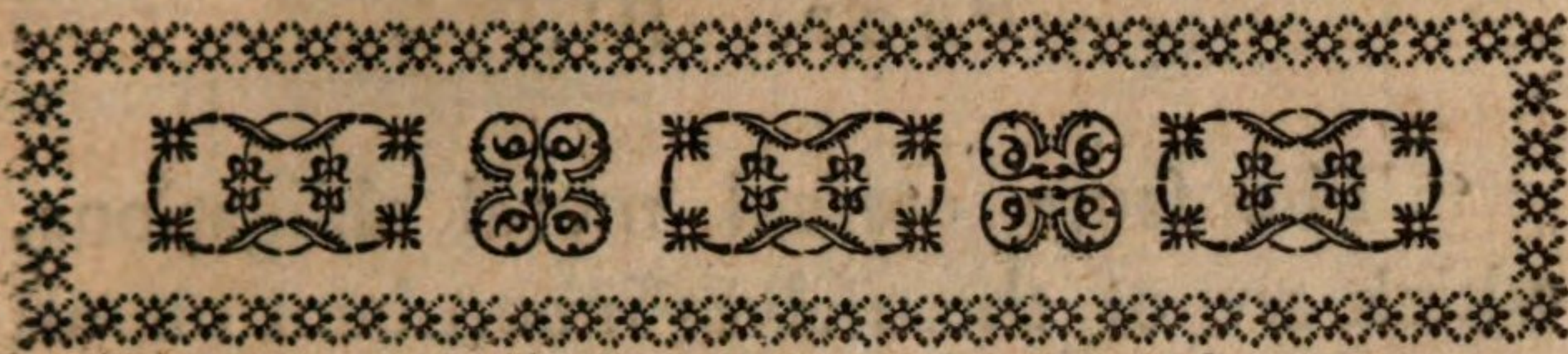


and enforced. If any farther advances could be made, he himself would have been the likeliest person to have made them : If I have but kept the ground which he gained, I think I shall have done well.



Dr. CLARKE'S





## Dr. CLARKE's Propositions.

### PROP. I.

“FROM the eternal and necessary differences of things, there naturally and necessarily arise certain moral obligations, which are of themselves incumbent on all rational creatures, antecedent to all positive institution, and to all expectation of reward or punishment.”

### PROP. II.

“The same eternal obligations, which arise necessarily from the natural differences of things, are moreover the express will, command, and law of God to all rational creatures.”



PROP. III.

“The same eternal moral obligations, which are of themselves incumbent on all rational creatures antecedent to any respect of particular reward or punishment, must yet certainly and necessarily be attended with rewards and punishments.”

PROP. IV.

“Because these rewards and punishments are not distributed in the present state, therefore there must of necessity be a future state.”

PROP. V.

“Though the necessity and indispensableness of all the great and moral obligations of natural religion, and also the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, be in general deducible from right reason ; yet such is the present corrupt estate and condition of mankind in the world, that very few are able in reality and effect to discover these things clearly and plainly for themselves ; but men have  
great



great need of particular teaching, and much instruction."

PROP. VI.

"All the teaching and instruction of the best heathen philosophers was, for many reasons, utterly insufficient to reform mankind."

PROP. VII.

"Therefore, there was plainly wanting a divine Revelation, to recover mankind out of their universally degenerate estate."

**Y**OU see by what clue this learned writer leads us to the use and necessity of divine Revelation: and it is worthy observing, that the general view of the Gospel Revelation, as set forth by Dr. Clarke, exactly agrees with the account of it in the Gospel itself. He lays the foundation in natural religion, which he supposes to be binding upon the consciences of men, antecedently to any revelation from God, and calls in the Gospel  
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pel as a remedy to that apostacy from the law of nature which had generally prevailed in the world. And does not the Scripture tell us the same thing, when it every where mentions the bringing men to repentance as the end of the preaching of Christ and his Apostles? Repentance supposes the violation of some law. A law then there must have been, \* previous to the Gospel Revelation, to the obedience of which men were to be called by the preaching of the Gospel. And what was this law? The ritual law it could not be; for Christ came not to restore obedience to this law, but to put an end to the law itself. It must therefore be the law of nature; which appears yet farther from this consideration, that the end of Christ's coming was the same both to Jews and Gentiles, according to that of the Apostle, *Tit. ii. 11, 12. For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto ALL men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

\* See Bp. of Bangor's Sermon. *Propagat. Gospel.*



This is a very plain description of the law of nature; which, since it was the only law the Gentiles were under and had transgressed, it must therefore be that law the obedience to which it was the intention and purpose of the Gospel to restore.

If there are any who think it a disparagement to the Gospel, that it should serve as an instrument to restore natural Religion, the reason must be that they do not rightly consider what natural religion means. Natural religion includes every thing that is fit and proper for man to do, considered as a rational agent; and since so far as man is a rational agent, so far he is like God, natural religion must therefore (as far as it goes) be the eternal reason and wisdom of God. And can there be a greater recommendation of the Gospel than the shewing its subserviency to such an end as this?---But this is not the case of the author of Christianity as old, &c. For the fault he finds with the doctor's scheme, is not that it disparages the Gospel, but that it disparages natural religion, which, he thinks, neither did nor could want any such support as the Gospel



Gospel offers. For this he appeals to Dr. Clarke's own account of natural religion, and pretends that the sufficiency and perfection which he allows to the law of nature, under his four first propositions, is inconsistent with the defects mentioned under the fifth and sixth, as the foundation upon which he builds the necessity of the Gospel Revelation. By this state of the case therefore you will perceive that the first four propositions, which contain the grounds of natural religion (the evidences of which, as supported by the belief of a God and a future state, are alike supposed on both sides) are entirely out of the question ; and the single point is this---are the defects, upon which the doctor builds the necessity of revelation, inconsistent with any thing that he hath allowed, or which ought to be allowed to the law of nature ? To bring this point to a clear issue, I will set down the fifth and sixth propositions, as the doctor himself hath explained them, at large, and see what the gentleman's objections will amount to : after which I shall more fully support the inference contained in the seventh,



seventh, viz. That a divine Revelation was indeed necessary. The proposition (in the doctor's words) stands thus :

PROP. V.

“ Though the necessity and indispensableness of all the great and moral obligations of natural religion, and also the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, be in general deducible, even demonstrably, by a chain of clear and undeniable reasoning ; yet (in the present state of the world, by what means soever it came originally to be so corrupted ; the particular circumstances whereof could not now be certainly known but by Revelation) such is the carelessness, inconsiderateness, and want of attention, of the greater part of mankind ; so many the prejudices, and false notions taken up by evil education ; so strong and violent the unreasonable lusts, appetites, and desires of sense ; and so great the blindness introduced by superstitious opinions, vicious customs, and debauched practices, through the world ; that very few are able in reality and effect  
to



to discover these things clearly for themselves ; but men have great need of particular teaching and much instruction, to convince them of the truth, and certainty, and importance of these things ; to give them a due sense and clear and just apprehensions concerning them, and to bring them effectually to the practice of the plainest and most necessary duties."

Those who would see the particulars of this proposition deduced at large, may consult the doctor himself. In general we should take notice, 1. that the question concerns the plain and necessary duties of natural religion, as resulting from the belief of God and a future state ; the sense and apprehension of which the doctor supposes may be in great measure lost by a general corruption. 2. that the whole argument rests upon the supposition of a state of corruption actually subsisting in the world, into the original and cause of which the doctor does not enquire. This latter observation ought so much the more to be attended to, because the objector has taken occasion from that little which Dr. Clarke hath said about the  
original



original dignity of human nature, to make himself \* merry with the story of the Fall, as recorded in the Old Testament; the common mistake of those who have more wit than discretion. Now to set the gentleman at rest, we will suppose that we had never heard any thing of Eve and the Serpent, and I will ask him this one plain question; Is it not in fact true, that the world is in a very corrupted state; and was it not so at the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world? He does not, he cannot, deny this, without contradicting all history and experience. And what then does he say? why, he charges it upon the doctor, that according to his account † “the fault was not in mankind, but in the guide God gave them;” and insinuates, that this is inconsistent with what he has elsewhere allowed to the law of nature, viz. that ‡ “the reason of all men every where as naturally and necessarily assents to it, as all animals conspire in the pulse and motion of the heart and arteries, or as all men agree in their judgment

\* Christianity as old, &c. P. 385, &c. † P. 376.

‡ P. 374.



concerning the whiteness of snow, or the brightness of the sun." But the foundation of this objection is manifestly false. Dr. Clarke does not lay the fault upon the guide which God gave to mankind, that is, not upon the deficiency of human reason, but upon mankind abusing their reason ; as appears from the very words of his proposition : " The necessity (says he) and indispensibleness of all the great and moral obligations of natural religion, and also the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, are demonstrable by a chain of undeniable reasoning." What is this but saying in so many words, that so far as these great points are concerned, there is no fault in the guide ? where then is the defect ? why plainly in mankind, who (proceeds the doctor) were sunk into such " a debauched and corrupted estate, that very few were able in reality and effect to discover these things for themselves, &c." If you desire any thing plainer, take it likewise from Dr. Clarke in another place, quoted by the objector himself, p. 374. " Before the mind of man was depraved with prejudicate opinions,  
corrupt



corrupt affections, and vicious inclinations, customs and habits, right reason may justly be supposed to have been a Sufficient Guide----but in the present circumstances and condition of mankind" \*----the case is otherwise. And yet even under this general corruption and depravity of the world, the doctor confesses there have been some few in all ages, who have made so good use of their reason, as to have been able to discover these plain moral duties, as you will see particularly by and by. All which shews beyond contradiction, that, according to the doctor, human reason, as given by God, and as it has in fact always subsisted in some of the wiser and better part of mankind, is a very plain and sufficient guide to instruct us in these great and necessary points; the ignorance whereof in many others is to be resolved, not into the want of a sufficient guide, but into the force of those corruptions, which quench the light held forth to us by this guide, and which, if steadily pursued, would lead us to our du-

\* Evid. P. 303. 7th Edition.



ties: just as when a man's legs are bound fast with cords, the true reason why he cannot run, is not that he has not in himself the natural power, but that by this external accidental cause that power is hindered from exerting itself.

The inconsistency therefore which the objector charges upon Dr. Clarke is purely in his own imagination, if indeed he can be so weak as not to see that he charges him unjustly. The doctor says (and he says truly) that † “the reason of all men every where as naturally and necessarily assents to the law of nature, as all animals conspire in the pulse and motion of the heart, &c.” but then it must be supposed, that men do apply their reason carefully to consider and judge of these things; for the assent necessarily follows the use or application of judgment, and not the power or faculty of judging. You might as truly and as properly say of any demonstration in Sir Isaac Newton, that the reason of all men every where as naturally and necessarily assents to it, as to

† Evid. P. 303. 7th Edition.



such propositions as these, snow is white, and the sun is bright; that is, all who by exercise of their reason in such matters have attained to the ability of understanding demonstrations, must necessarily assent to it. Now as the asserting the universal evidence of mathematical demonstrations, is very consistent with supposing that the generality of mankind are not mathematicians; so the asserting the universal evidence and clearness of the principles of natural religion, is as consistent with supposing that the generality of mankind may be ignorant of these principles, upon supposition that the generality of mankind are so corrupted and depraved, as not to apply themselves to consider these things with that seriousness, attention and impartiality, which is necessary to enable them to frame a true judgment concerning them. To this purpose the doctor has explained himself very fully elsewhere; where speaking of the eternal and necessary differences of things, and the common duties which arise from them, he says, † “these things

† Evid. P. 177. 7th Edition.



are so notoriously plain and self-evident, that nothing but the extremest stupidity of mind, corruption of manners, or perverseness of spirit, can possibly make any man entertain the least doubt of them. For a man endued with reason to deny the truth of these things, is the very same thing, as if a man that has the use of his sight, should, at the same time that he beholds the sun, deny that there is any such thing as light in the world; or, as if a man that understands geometry, or arithmetick, should deny the most obvious and known proportions of lines or numbers."

----Can any thing be more plain? The proportions of lines and numbers are obvious; to whom? why, to those who understand geometry and arithmetick. Again; that there is light in the sun is also plain; to whom? why, to those who have the use of their sight. In like manner, the common duties of natural religion cannot be mistaken; that is (as the doctor expressly says) by those who have the use of their reason, and are not hindered from discerning them by corruption of manners, or perverseness of spirit.

Other



Other passages might easily be produced; but it is needless: For those must be utter strangers to Dr. Clarke and his writings, who do not see that all that he says of the clearness of natural light, presupposes the careful use and application of that light; and that the true cause of that gross ignorance which prevailed, and does still prevail in many parts of the world, with respect to the common duties of natural religion, was not that reason, if attended to, was not a sufficient guide, but that men were led aside from attending to it by corruption. In Dr. Clarke's account then, the light of nature is clear and strong, but not irresistible. And does not the objector say the same thing himself? † No rational creature can be ignorant of it (natural religion) who attends to the dictates of his own mind. They are his own words, and imply, to my understanding, that if men will not attend to the dictates of their own minds, they may and will be ignorant. Now this is all that Dr. Clarke has said: and why may

† *P.* 379.

C 3

not



not he be allowed to say it, as well as the objector?

To proceed : As in this account the doctor is perfectly uniform and consistent with himself, so he agrees with the scripture representations ; and in particular with St. Paul, who speaking of the light which God had given to the heathen world, declares it to be such as left them inexcusable : *The wrath of God (says he) is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.---Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse. Rom. ii.* By being manifest in them, and clearly seen, the Apostle means the same thing that Dr. Clarke does, to wit, that the main principles of natural religion were demonstrable by reason, to such as had the true use of reason, and would apply themselves seriously, and with an honest mind, to weigh and consider them. But then, as to the state of religion



ligion as it subsisted in fact, what does he say ? why, that *when they knew* (or might have known) *God, they glorified him not as God.----But became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.----That they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and to creeping things.----That they gave themselves up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts.----That they were filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, &c.* And, that knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

These are facts which stand not upon the single authority of scripture, but upon the testimony of all ancient writers. Much of them we see daily among ourselves, notwithstanding the advantages of the Gospel light ; and if we look into Pagan countries, we shall see much more. But I was the more willing to quote St. Paul, because the objector has taken  
some



some pains to shew that Dr. Clarke has contradicted him in this particular ; but in vain ! for where lies the inconsistency ? why, says he, † “ the Apostle Paul is so far from favouring the doctor’s hypothesis of an invincible ignorance, even in the wisest and best philosophers, that he ---- supposes the reason why they were to be punished, was their sinning against light and knowledge.” Where did the gentleman learn that Dr. Clarke’s scheme goes upon the supposition that the heathens were invincibly ignorant ? that they were ignorant (many of them) he does indeed suppose ; and he supposes likewise that many of them were wicked and perverse : and so does St. Paul ; for whilst he says of some, that they *knew the judgment of God, &c.* he says of others, that they *became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darken’d, and that professing themselves wise, they became fools.* That both ignorance and obstinacy had their share in bringing on this general corruption, there can be no question ;

† P. 380.

which



which of them had the greatest, it is scarce possible to say ; less possible yet to ascertain, whether those who were ignorant of the law of nature were invincibly so ; and therefore these are points, which neither St. Paul nor Dr. Clarke have made any part of the argument. Nor was it needful that they should ; for whatever was the cause of this general corruption, whether ignorance or perverseness, the single question is this, was there need of particular teaching and instruction in order to reform mankind, or was there not ? I do not now ask, whether there was any need of Revelation ? for the proposition we are considering does not reach so far : but I ask, whether instruction in general was not necessary ? I say it was ; and deny it you cannot, whether you think it right to resolve the cause of this general corruption into invincible ignorance, or into any thing else. It is very probable, that when the world became very bad, and errors grew up with the understanding of men, and became confirmed by long education and custom, they might at last in many become invincible ; that is (for this is what we mean)



mean) invincible without some better help than their own. In this case then, the want of instruction is confessed. But what if you suppose, that in the worst state of the world that ever was, it was possible for the generality of mankind to have rescued themselves from error and corruption, supposing that they had been so disposed, and would have taken pains to understand and practise their duties? yet, since it is plain in fact, that they were not so disposed; and it was a general observation, that every age, instead of growing better, grew worse and worse; there can be no pretence to say, that particular teaching and instructing was not necessary: for (as Cicero says in a passage quoted by Dr. Clarke to this purpose) \* “As in physick, it matters nothing whether a disease be such, as that no man does, or no man can recover from it; so in the present case, there is no difference, whether men cannot reform themselves, or whether they will not.” In a word, if instruction be not necessary to inform the judgment,

\* Evid. P. 302. 7th Edition.

(as



(as in many cases it certainly is not) it may be necessary to influence the will ; or, as Dr. Clarke speaks, † “to remove that levity and heedlessness of spirit, which makes men frequently to be, in their practice, very little influenced by what in abstract opinion they may seem most firmly to believe.”

Upon the whole then, the doctor very justly concludes, that ‡ “notwithstanding the natural demonstrableness both of the obligations and motives of morality ; yet, considering the manifest corruptedness of the present estate which human nature is in, the generality of men must not by any means be left wholly to the workings of their own minds, to the use of their natural faculties, and the bare convictions of their own reason ; but must be particularly taught and instructed in their duty, and have the motives of it frequently and strongly pressed and inculcated upon them with great weight and authority.” The truth of which maxim is so sensibly felt and experienced every day, that all the

† Evid. P. 279, 280, 281. 7th Edit.

‡ Ibid.  
world



world acts upon it, and thinks it direct madness not to do so in any case where the interests of their families are concerned. One way indeed there is, which will in a great measure destroy this argument, and that is the taking away the foundation upon which it rests. When Dr. Clarke says, that considering the present corrupted state of the world, particular teaching and instruction is necessary to recover men out of darkness and ignorance, and makes this the ground-work upon which he builds the necessity of Revelation; it is supposed and taken for granted, that it is a thing of great importance, that natural religion be understood and practised in its purity. But it is clear to me, that the objector is of another opinion, because he every where sets up Sincerity, as an equivalent to the keeping of the moral law; and takes great pains to persuade his readers, that a state of ignorance is just as good as a state of knowledge, provided men act according to the light they have. It is not yet forgot, I suppose, what use was made of this way of reasoning some years since to other purposes. This gentleman has so far improved



proved upon the plan, as to throw out not only Faith, but Morality ; and to advance the grossest of the Pagan errors and superstitions, to an equality with that pure and undefiled religion which reason teaches. No wonder indeed, that all use of instruction is set aside upon this foot, and that the clergy are at every turn treated with contempt, and represented as the plagues and burden of the earth ! The passages upon which I found this charge shall be produced at a proper season : but since this is an objection which Dr. Clarke never once thought of (and no wonder he did not, for it is a thought that would hardly enter into the heart of any reasonable man ;) since likewise the weight of it (whatever it be) affects not any single part only, but the whole of the doctor's system, I think it proper to supersede the consideration of it for the present ; and, supposing (as he does) that it was necessary that mankind should, by some means or other be set right in their notions about natural religion, shall go on with him to the next proposition.

PROP.



## PROP. VI.

“ Though almost in every age there have indeed been in the heathen world some wise, and brave, and good men, who have made it their business to study and practise the duties of natural religion themselves, and to teach and exhort others to do the like ; who seem therefore to have been raised up by Providence, as instruments to reprove in some measure, and put some kind of check to the extreme superstition and wickedness of the nations wherein they lived : yet none of these ever have been able to reform the world with any considerably great, and universal success : because they have been but very few that have in earnest set themselves about this excellent work ; and they that have indeed sincerely done it, have themselves been entirely ignorant of some doctrines, and very doubtful and uncertain of others, absolutely necessary for the bringing about that great end : and those things which they have been certain of, and in good measure understood, they have not been able to prove and explain clearly enough :



nough : and those which they have been able both to prove and explain by sufficiently clear reasoning, they have not yet had authority enough to enforce and inculcate upon mens minds with so strong an impression, as to influence and govern the general practice of the world."

In this proposition Dr. Clarke has set forth the reasons why the instructions of the heathen philosophers were not sufficient for the reformation of the world. These reasons (more distinctly) are as follows, *viz.*

1. Because the number of those who attempted the reformation of mankind was but small.

2. These few were intirely ignorant of some doctrines, absolutely necessary for the bringing about this reformation : and

3. Very doubtful concerning others.

4. What they did understand, and were certain of, they could not sufficiently prove and explain.

5. What they could both prove and explain, they had not authority enough to enforce.

Of



Of these points the objector has singled out one from among the rest, upon which he has thought fit to bestow some particular remarks ; and that is the second, where the doctor has affirmed that the heathen philosophers were themselves intirely ignorant of some doctrines, the knowledge whereof was absolutely necessary towards the reformation of mankind. The particulars couch'd under this general proposition (as explained afterwards by the doctor himself) are two ; viz. 1. that these philosophers ‡ were intirely and unavoidably ignorant of the manner in which God might be acceptably worshipped ; and, 2. that they were also || most absolutely and unavoidably ignorant of the method, by which such as have erred from the right way, and have offended God, may yet again restore themselves to the favour of God, and to the hopes of happiness. Upon this state of the case, before I proceed any farther, I beg leave to make these two general observations, viz.

‡ Evid. P. 290.      || Ibid. P. 293.



I. That the doctor's charge now lies not against man (as in the foregoing proposition) but directly against the light of nature. Reason considered as a law, that is, considered as prescribing to us a rule of behaviour, he had before said, is a plain and perfect law : plain, as it was discoverable by all who were not hindered from discerning it by their lusts and passions ; and perfect, as had it been followed, it would have been ‡ “ a sufficient guide, and a principle powerful enough to preserve men in the constant practice of their duty.” But, a state of sin and corruption supposed, the doctor now says, that there were some doctrines or truths necessary to recall men to their duty, or to restore obedience to the law of reason, which the most improved understanding of men could not discover : for he says of these philosophers, not only that they were ignorant, but that they were unavoidably ignorant of them. Let no man think this a reproach to nature, or to the author of nature : the reason of man, as given him by God, dis-

‡ Evid. P. 303.



covered to him a perfect rule, and furnished him with proper motives to obedience; but the state of man being altered by sin, what wonder is it that difficulties should arise, which the original law was not able sufficiently to clear and explain? there is nothing in this more than what is daily seen in hundreds of instances. A king, for instance, sends his ambassador with full instructions, to negotiate an affair relating to the publick good: if the ambassador pursues his instructions, all will be well; but if he departs from them in any material point, he disconcerts the whole, and of necessity he must either be recalled, or receive new instructions: but,

2. The doctor keeps still close to his first principle, to wit, that the end of the Gospel revelation was to repair the breaches of that very law which subsisted antecedently to this state of sin and corruption; that is, the pure and perfect law of nature. There were (says he) some doctrines, or truths, necessary to be understood by man in his corrupted estate, of which the heathen philosophers were unavoidably ignorant. Necessary? to what end? to mend



mend or perfect the original law? no; but, (as he expressly says) “to reform the world, to influence the behaviour of men, and to bring them back to the duties of natural religion,” against which they had transgressed. So that, in this account, these doctrines must be considered, not as perfective of the law of nature, but as helps to restore obedience to the law of nature; as will in fact appear by attending to those particulars, which he says the light of nature could not discover. With respect to the method by which those who have offended God may again be reconciled to him, the case is clear; for as the want of the knowledge of this leaves men destitute of that foundation for trust in God, which is necessary to support religion in the world, so when God tells us that he will accept us upon such or such conditions, he must be understood as offering this to us as a motive, or argument, to lead us to the performance of these conditions; which, since they all of them (so far as our behaviour is concerned) center in repentance, repentance must therefore be the end to which such declarations were in-



tended to serve as a means subordinate. The like may be said of religious worship, which though (in Dr. Clarke's account) it implies something to be done which the law of nature does not command, yet adds nothing to the perfection of that law (which it leaves just as it finds it) but only administers a help to the infirmities and imperfections of men. Let us suppose this religious worship to consist of prayer, sacrifice, or whatever else you please; separate such acts from natural religion, and see what they are good for. To perform an act of religious worship in obedience to the command of God, is the actual exercise of natural religion; that is, it is an act of obedience to a general law of nature, applied to such or such particular instances of duty; and if, in consequence of this, our consciences are awakened, our hope and trust in God confirmed, and our good resolution of amendment brought forth into suitable acts of virtue and piety, they have their just and proper effect, and will appear to be what they were intended to be, the means of virtue; but suppose the same acts done without regard to  
God



God in the intention, or without repentance and amendment in the execution, and there will be no more in them than there is in the most indifferent and trifling actions of life. Now if such acts of worship borrow all their virtue from natural religion, it is plain that natural religion can receive no perfection from them; men may improve by the use of them, and grow more perfect in the practice of religion; but religion itself is what it always was, without alteration.

This observation perhaps may help to clear up the sense of a passage, which the objector has, more than once, introduced with great triumph; viz. that \* “the religion of the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature----and its precepts declarative of that original religion which was as old as the creation.” What the gentleman would make the bishop say in these words, is, that Christianity (including all the light it gives, and all the helps it administers) is nothing else but mere natural reason. This is his own doc-

\* Bp. of Bangor's Serm. Prop. Gosp. P. 10--13.



trine indeed, but it is none of his lordship's, who expressly says that there are "† doctrines Peculiar to Christianity, which though not different (i. e. which though they do not contradict) are yet distinct from the principles of reason and nature." Upon this the objector remarks, that the bishop † "does not say that these doctrines (which he mentions as peculiar to Christianity) are distinct from those doctrines which flow from the principles of reason and nature;" that is (as I understand him) which may be deduced by plain consequence from the principles of reason and nature. Asking the gentleman's pardon, his lordship does say so, and that in express terms : for he says that || "the Gospel has taught us things, which by nature we could not know—and that there are some institutions in the Gospel, which in their own nature are no constituent parts of religion." And to what end does his lordship say, that the Gospel has taught us these things ? why, "to confirm and strengthen our hope in God----and to con-

† Ibid. P. 19.      † P. 82.      || P. 23.



vey to us new supplies of spiritual strength ; that is (as he elsewhere says) \* not to supply the defects of religion, which continued in its first purity and perfection, but of nature, which was fallen from the original dignity of the creation." If doctor Clarke, or the bishop, had either of them any occasion for that honour which they might receive from an exact agreement in each other's sentiments, they have, in this particular, both a right to demand it. What is peculiar in the Gospel is by neither considered as any constituent part of religion, but as an instrument serving to secure the practice of religion; in which view it is certain that nothing will be left to be the true religion of the Gospel, but the religion of nature. Some perhaps will object and say, that the Positive duties of Christianity, since they are the commands of God, should be considered as constituent parts of the religion of the Gospel ; but to what purpose is it to contend about words, when the thing is agreed on? that positive institutions were intended as

\* P. 20.



instruments to secure natural religion, you must say as well as the bishop: that the Gospel has added such institutions, his lordship maintains as fully as you. Call these institutions religion, or helps to religion, it makes no difference; the matter will stand just as it does, and the objector's inference will be either false, or nothing to his purpose, viz. that † “nothing could be added by our Saviour to a law that had no defects.” To the law, as a law, nothing could be added: and this is what his lordship says: but this concession can be of no use to the objector, because there will still be room enough for Revelation to come in, if human knowledge, or human nature, was capable of such improvements by it, and of receiving such helps from it, as would enable man, in his corrupted state, to understand the law more perfectly, and to practise it more uniformly and steadily: and if the gentleman means to infer from his lordship's assertion, that human knowledge was not capable of such improvements, &c. from the Gospel Reve-

† P. 82.

lation,



lation, he will draw an inference which the premises will not justify, and which his lordship's declared sense apparently contradicts.

As this observation shews his lordship's account of Christianity to be right and true ; so it shews the falshood of a notion of the objector, which he advances against Dr. Clarke, and which lies at the bottom of almost all his mistakes. It is this : that because the law of nature is the Supreme law, therefore it must be the Sole law : whereas it is very clear, that though the supreme law will admit of no law in opposition to it, yet in subordination to it, it will admit of many. It farther shews his absurdity, in charging the doctor with introducing arbitrary commands, in consequence of his assigning to the Gospel, doctrines and precepts which the law of nature teacheth not ; for a command founded upon just and weighty considerations is certainly no arbitrary command : now the consideration upon which Dr. Clarke founds every thing introduced by the Gospel, is its subserviency to promote



mote natural religion. † “Every one of the doctrines (says he) which Christianity teaches as matter of truth, has a natural tendency, and a direct powerful influence to reform mens lives, and to correct their manners: this is the great end and ultimate design of all true religion; and it is a very great and fatal mistake, to think that any belief whatsoever can be any otherwise of any benefit to men, than as it is fitted to promote this main end.” Again, ‡ “the moral part of our Saviour’s doctrine would have appeared infallibly true, whether he had ever worked any miracles, or no; the rest of his doctrine was what evidently tended to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness among men.” You see plainly, that, according to Dr. Clarke, whatever there is in Christianity besides morality or natural religion, is to be considered as a means subservient to morality; to promote which, he says, that there is nothing revealed by Christ, which has not a direct evident tendency. Suppose now this to be fact; and let the

† P. 361.      ‡ P. 384.



gentleman tell me, what sense there is in all this outcry about arbitrary commands. If the doctrines of Christianity have (as the doctor says) a direct evident tendency to promote the practice of righteousness, I hope they are good for something; and if so, then they are not arbitrary.

But he goes on: † “The deists can by no means come into the doctor’s distinction between the moral part of our Saviour’s doctrine, and that part which evidently tends to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness; it being manifestly a distinction without any difference.” His meaning is, that whatever has an evident tendency to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness, is really a duty of natural religion. To this purpose he speaks plainly in the following words: || “It is demonstrably fit, just, and reasonable for man to do every thing that evidently tends to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness.” And again, in the next page, “those things which evidently

† P. 372.

|| Ibid.



tend to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness, are plain moral duties, and perpetually oblige." What the gentleman would have us infer from all this, is, that according to Dr. Clark's own account, Christianity can be nothing else but mere natural religion. For since the doctor admits nothing into Christianity but natural religion, and what has an evident tendency to promote natural religion, it must follow, that if (as is now alledged) there be no real difference between these things, the whole must be natural religion, and nothing else. The conclusion I should not dispute if the premises were true: but they are absurd, whether you consider them upon the foot of natural religion, or upon the foot of revelation.

Let us, in the first place, suppose that there was no revelation in being, and that all men were left merely to the guidance of natural light. Upon this foot, I say, there are evidently many things, which have a tendency to promote natural religion, which yet themselves are precisely no duties of natural religion. To give one instance. Acts of mortification and self-denial



denial have many times a natural tendency to promote virtue ; but will you say that they are plain moral duties, which perpetually oblige? You cannot say it; for tho' they are proper, yet they are not at all times necessary : the farthest you can go in this case will be to say, that every man is under a general obligation in some way or other, to do what to him appears necessary and expedient to promote natural religion; and in this way rather than another, if he finds it most expedient. But in plain moral duties the case is otherwise; for a man must not pretend to say, I will shew my reverence to God, either by paying my dues, or by living soberly, as I shall see cause; for he must always see cause, why he is perpetually obliged to both.

This case might be exemplified by a variety of instances taken from civil government; for there are hundreds of ways by which the publick good may be promoted, which yet a man may decline without being guilty of the breach of law. Take now revelation into the question, and the distinction will be much clearer : for here that which is appointed, as tending to promote



promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness, may be of such a sort, as that even the tendency and propriety of the means in order to the end, shall entirely depend upon the supposition of some fact or other declared or made known by revelation. In the case already mention'd, the tendency to promote the honour of God appears to the natural understanding of man, supposing him to be only under the guidance of natural light; and all that I observe is, that tho' these acts have this tendency, yet they are not plain moral duties. But there are some institutions in the gospel, from which if you take away the gospel, they will not only not be obligatory, but the very propriety of them, as a means to promote the honour of God, will immediately cease. Thus, for instance, the revelation of the gospel supposed, and the redemption of the world by the death of Christ, and our obligation to obey his laws, it is most apparent, that the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, in order to perpetuate the memory of Christ's death, and to revive the sense of our own obligation, has



has a manifest and natural tendency to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness ; but if you throw out the revelation, i. e. if you take away the facts to which this institution has a relation it is not only improper, but absurd. Here then is an instance of something, which, tho' upon the foot of revelation it has a manifest tendency to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness, yet cannot be consider'd as a plain moral duty, or any thing like it.

I chuse rather to instance in practical matters; because, as to speculative truths, there is not the least difficulty in conceiving, that there may be several, which, tho' they be supposed not discoverable by reason, yet when made known to us by the light of revelation, will greatly tend to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness; of which sort the doctrine of reconciliation, as taught in the Gospel, is an unexceptionable instance. But even as to practice, I say, it appears plain, that there are many things which have a natural propriety and usefulness to promote moral virtue, upon the foot of both natural  
and



and revealed religion, which are yet themselves no moral duties. This is the foundation of that common distinction between duties moral and positive, or (as Dr. Clarke sometimes expresses it) † necessary and indifferent; and the gentleman may from hence see his own mistake in asking, || “how can there be any such (indifferent) doctrines in the Christian religion, if what he (Dr. Clarke) says be true, that every one of the doctrines it teaches, has a natural tendency to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness?” for if you speak of indifferent with respect to use or no use, there can indeed be no indifferent doctrines in the Christian religion, i. e. there can be no useless doctrines: but if you say indifferent with respect to obligation or no obligation (which is the sense in which Dr. Clarke uses the word) there may be, and are such doctrines, as shew us duties, which would have been no duties, if the Gospel had not commanded them. And this is one great use of Revelation, that it has pre-

† P. 384.      || P. 370.



scribed to us many rules of worship that are proper to promote the honour of God, and the practice of righteousness, which either (Revelation not supposed) have no foundation in reason, or which if they do appear to reason to be in themselves useful and proper, we should yet have been under no direct and formal obligation to comply with.

What I mean by this at present, is only to shew that Dr. Clarke is throughout consistent with himself, in making natural religion the end, and the particular doctrines and institutions of the Gospel the means subordinate to that end: and that, if it be true, what he asserts, that natural reason can give us no satisfaction, either as to the method by which sinners may be reconciled unto God, or as to the way or manner in which God may be acceptably worshipped, he has laid a good foundation whereupon to build the use and necessity of Revelation, in order to recover mankind out of their corrupted estate. It remains now therefore to consider what objections the gentleman has made against these principles.

E

To



To begin with the first, to wit, the method by which finners may be reconciled unto God. Upon this point Dr. Clarke lays down the following proposition, viz. that † “they cannot certainly know, to whom God has not declared it, that he will receive returning finners, and accept of repentance instead of perfect obedience; because, though this be the most probable, and only means of reconciliation that nature suggests, yet---it cannot positively be proved from any of God’s attributes that he is absolutely obliged to pardon all creatures, all their sins, at all times, barely and immediately upon their repenting.” In opposition to which the objector asserts, that ‡ “the same knowledge in man which shews him the law he is under as a man, shews him also the way of attoning the merciful, kind, compassionate author of his being, when he has transgressed that law; and that it is an article of natural religion, that forgiveness does certainly follow repentance.” That the opposition between these writers may be clearly un-

† P. 293. ‡ P. 391.

derstood



derstood, it will be necessary to consider what Dr. Clarke means by receiving returning sinners: and by this it is plain that he intends receiving them to that favour which they would have enjoyed, upon supposition that they had never sinned. For this "receiving returning sinners," is immediately explained by "accepting repentance instead of perfect obedience;" that is, accepting repentance as an Equivalent to perfect obedience; or, as answering every purpose that would have been answered by perfect obedience. So that if the gentleman will contradict Dr. Clarke, he must maintain, that whether a man hath never sinned against the law of nature, or whether he hath sinned, and afterwards at any time repents, it is clear and certain from the law of nature, that his condition before God, with respect to his favour, and the happiness consequent upon that favour, will be exactly the same. But how does the light of nature shew this? or how can it shew it; why, it is clear, he says, from the mercy and goodness of God. And does our reason shew us the exact measure of God's mercy and goodness? not unless



it shews us the exact measure of his wisdom. God is merciful and good ; but his mercy and goodness must always be supposed to be exercised in such a manner as becomes his wisdom ; that is, in such a manner as is consistent with the † whole scheme, order, and state of things, the method of his governing the world, and his design in creating mankind ; of which, since (as Dr. Clarke ‡ observes, and the reason of the thing shews) we are not competent judges, it is impossible that we should know, without some declaration from God, whether it is fit or not fit that he should deal with mankind in such a sort, as if there were no difference between not sinning at all, and sinning, and afterwards repenting. Mercy and goodness are amiable perfections ; and when we consider them as subsisting in God, before whom we all of us stand as sinners, and without whose mercy we must all perish, passion and self-love will be very apt to carry us to say more of them than knowledge will justify. This perhaps may be the reason

† *P.* 289.‡ *Ibid.*



why some great men (who had no design to undervalue the Gospel) have spoken of it as a thing which the light of nature puts beyond all doubt, that “the author of the law of nature, and God of patience and consolation, who is rich in mercy, will forgive his frail offspring, if they acknowledge their faults, beg his pardon, and resolve in earnest for the future to conform their actions to this rule, which they own to be just and right.” They are the words of Mr. Locke, as cited by the objector: but great names weigh nothing in a case where the greatest may so easily be mistaken. It is plain that this argument rests upon the goodness of God, and upon nothing else: now there is no argument to be drawn from the abstracted notion of goodness, to shew that it is fit and reasonable for God to forgive all sinners, barely and immediately upon their repentance, that will not as well prove that every man, and consequently every magistrate, ought to do the same. But in this case he must needs see and confess that the argument will not hold: magistrates do not forgive all offenders against laws either human or



divine, upon their repentance; and there are evident reasons arising from the consideration of the general good, which shew that they ought not: now if in such cases any one should object against the goodness of the magistrate, the answer would be obvious, viz. that goodness must be directed by wisdom, and shewn in such a way as is consistent with the general ends of government; all which will be as true when applied to God, who must be considered, not merely as a good Being, but as a wise Being too, who in the government of the world must be supposed to have some general view, to which every particular administration must be directed, as to one common center: so that unless you had such a perfect notion of the whole scheme of Providence, as to be able to demonstrate, that in the nature of the thing it is impossible that there should be any such circumstances or considerations respecting the general system, which may make it fit and reasonable that God should not forgive sinners barely and immediately upon their repentance, all you can urge from the goodness of God will fall short of the purpose.

Does



Does the gentleman now pretend that we have such a perfect knowledge of the whole scheme of Providence? no: he \* allows we have not, and believes there is none at present who have, or pretend to have, so extensive a knowledge. I am glad to hear once a confession from him that he is less wise than his maker: and had he at all times been mindful of this, when he has undertaken to prescribe to God, and to tell him what it is fit or not fit for him to do in the government of the world, some great mistakes might have been avoided, as you will see more fully afterwards. In the present case it is plain, that we can have no sure footing without Revelation. The Gospel assures us, that through the attonement made by Jesus Christ, our repentance shall be accepted as the fulfilling of the law. But, setting this apart, all our reasonings upon this subject would have been (as Dr. Clarke says) like wandering in the wide sea, without a guide to conduct us: Men might have talked confidently if they had pleased, but they could have proved nothing.

\* P. 384.

But



But let us take this matter a little higher. When we speak of God's forgiving or accepting sinners upon their repentance, we mean, I suppose, that he will forgive them in such a manner as to accept them to a state of eternal happiness after death. Upon the deist's scheme, we must suppose that man from the beginning was made mortal; and it is certain, that setting Revelation aside, nothing appears to the contrary. Let us suppose now, that every man had strictly fulfilled the law of nature, and that matters were so ordered in this world, as that virtue should be its own reward. Upon this state of the case I beg leave to ask, what certain foundation we could have to conclude, that there would be any such thing as a future state at all: all arguments drawn from the nature of the soul are precarious, and (as Dr. Clarke acknowledges) amount only to a \* probability; and his only demonstration (as he very justly terms it) from the unequal distribution of good and evil in this life, will be entirely taken away: for upon

\* *P.* 263, &c.



the hypothesis, happiness and misery are supposed to have a constant, orderly connexion with virtue and vice; so that it is plain upon this foot, that there can be no certain proof of a future state: for as God was at liberty at first to create man, or not to create him, he is at liberty to continue him in being for as long, or as short a time as he pleases; and if, whilst he was in being, every one has been happy in proportion to his virtue, there can be no cause for complaint.

Take now sin and corruption into the case, together with an unequal distribution of good and evil in this life, and see how much you will gain by it. Here is a law which you have transgressed; your disobedience, I hope, will not be pleaded as a title to any reward; no; but I have repented, you will say; and my obedience, subsequent to my repentance, will entitle me to a reward: but how so? obedience subsequent to transgression is but a part of the debt you owed to God, and certainly cannot have greater virtue than the same obedience would have had, in case you had never sinned: all you can say is this, that  
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an unequal distribution of good and evil in this life being now admitted, there will arise a necessity (in order to justify the providence of God) of supposing a future state of happiness and misery. Very well; but there will arise no necessity of an eternal reward: for an eternal reward is not necessary to justify the providence of God, in adjusting the inequalities which arise in this short and momentary state: so that in every view, eternal life, as offered to us in and through Jesus Christ, is the gift of God; of which (how desirable soever it be to the reason of man) reason, without the promise of God, could have given us no firm and certain assurance.

It will be of little weight perhaps with the objector to be told, that what I have now laid down is the doctrine of St. Paul, and contains in it the whole foundation of his reasoning in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, where he endeavours to bring both Jews and Gentiles to the faith of the Gospel, by offering this consideration, that they were all sinners; and that neither by the law of Moses, nor by the law of nature, was there any justification.



fication. Every one sees, that the sufficiency of the law, and the necessity of coming to the Gospel for justification, cannot both stand together. And yet a † late writer (that he might seem not to have lost all regard for the Scriptures) has attempted to reconcile them. The position he lays down in the strongest terms : “the religion of nature will shew how men may be reconciled to, and accepted of God.” How so? why thus --- “every argument that concludes for God’s goodness, mercy, long-suffering and patience, are demonstrations how men may be reconciled to, and accepted of God.” Of what weight all such arguments are, I have already shewn, and need not repeat; the point at present is, how is this doctrine reconcileable with St. Paul’s reasoning? And thus the gentleman explains it : “if a man is to stand or fall by law, his actions must be exactly agreeable to that law; but all have sinned---therefore none shall be justified by law: but what then? natural reason will teach men how they may be

† The true foundations of natural and revealed religion, P. 68, &c.



reconciled to God, and accepted by him, though they will not be justified by law." With the gentleman's leave, this is avoiding the difficulty, instead of removing it. The Apostle reasons in this manner: "against the law ye are all finners---by the law therefore ye cannot be justified---therefore ye must come to the Gospel for pardon and reconciliation." But how is this reasoning consistent (I say) with supposing, that the light of reason shews the way of reconciliation and acceptance, as plainly as the Gospel does? to this question we have no answer; all that he says amounts to no more than this, viz. that though we cannot be justified by the law, i. e. (for this is what he means) though we cannot plead innocency according to the law, it may nevertheless consistently be supposed, that natural reason will teach us how we may be reconciled and accepted. But the difficulty (in my apprehension) lies here; how is it consistent to offer the Gospel as a necessary means of reconciliation and acceptance, in virtue of this consideration, that "we cannot be justified by the law," if the way of reconciliation and ac-



acceptance be (as he says it is) demonstrable by natural reason without the Gospel? the Gospel itself justifies no otherwise, than as it is a declaration of the terms upon which God will be reconciled to sinners: now if the law of nature declares these terms as plainly as the Gospel, tell me, if you can, in what respect one is a law of justification more than the other. Here it is that the question pinches; and that the gentleman felt it, is clear from the following passage: ‡ “The law of nature is a law of strict unerring obedience, and righteousness consisted in exact obedience; and justification could be demanded only by such as were exactly righteous; but what then? all are sinners, as is manifest from the Scriptures, as well as from experience.” Thus far we are agreed; and now pray mind what follows: “what then is the use the apostle makes of this? why, we must not expect our justification from our obedience to the law of Moses, no, nor to the law of nature, but from something else.” Very right; and would it not

‡ P. 75.



have been natural for the gentleman to have said what that something else is? no doubt; but then his inconsistency with the apostle would have been too visible; and therefore, instead of setting forth what will justify us, he goes on with telling us only what will not: for thus it follows; “and does not the religion of nature teach men not to depend, or put the issue of their cause upon exact, never-failing obedience? certainly it does!” Come out of the dark, Sir, and tell us plainly what it is we are to depend upon. If the apostle were asked, he would say, that it is the free grace and mercy of God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; of the atonement made by Jesus Christ, for certain, the light of nature speaks not one word; and therefore this circumstance the gentleman must be presumed to throw entirely out of his account: and if he will say that the light of nature shews us, that repentance, without the atonement made by Jesus Christ, is That something else which we may depend upon for justification, I will believe him when he can prove it: but let him not pretend that he agrees  
with



with St. Paul, whose doctrine no more suits with his notions, than light does with darknefs.---but to proceed :

The next point to be considered is, whether the light of reason sufficiently instructs us, in what way God will be acceptably worshipped; upon which, that Dr. Clarke's opinion may be the better understood, it will be necessary to set it down in his own words : " that God ought to be worshipped, is, in general, as evident and plain from the light of nature, as any thing can be : but in what particular manner, and with what kind of service he will be worshipped, cannot certainly be discovered by bare reason. Obedience to the obligations of nature, and imitation of the moral attributes of God, the wisest philosophers easily knew was undoubtedly the most acceptable service to God : but some External Adoration seemed also to be necessary ; and how this was to be performed, they could not, with any certainty, discover." Upon this I must observe, that when the doctor speaks of it as a thing evident from the light of nature that God ought to be worshipped, he considers worship



ship in its largest extent ; that is, as including every thing by which we may express our reverence to the supreme Being : this, he says, the philosophers easily understood would best be done by obedience to the obligations of nature, and imitation of the moral attributes of God. The objector has taken notice of this as Dr. Clarke's opinion, and yet asks, how then can we be ignorant what worship we are to pay ? why, no, Sir ; thus far we cannot be ignorant what worship we are to pay, and Dr. Clarke tells you so ; but the dispute is concerning external adoration, which (says the doctor) seemed to be necessary ; and that it does so seem appears from the practice of all mankind : and indeed the light of nature shews us, that (the present corrupted state of mankind considered) some sort of external worship is necessary, to preserve a sense of religion in the world : but in what way this may best be performed, or what sort of worship God will most approve, natural reason cannot, with any certainty, discover.

This appears to me to be Dr. Clarke's sense. Does the objector now deny that  
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some sort of external worship is necessary, to preserve a sense of religion in the world? no: he tells us \* “it is the voice of nature that God should be worshipped publicly:” but he thinks it “† hard fate, that these philosophers should be indispensably obliged to worship God acceptably, and yet be unavoidably ignorant how to perform this acceptable worship.” Where did the gentleman learn that these philosophers were indispensably obliged to worship God acceptably? Dr. Clarke says no such thing, nor can any such thing in reason be affirmed; because, what a man has not the means of knowing, he can be under no indispensable obligation to perform. But what men are bound, or not bound to do, is no part of the question, as I shall fully shew by and by: the point is, did these philosophers, in fact, understand what sort of external worship God would best approve; or, does reason afford sufficient light in this matter? Dr. Clarke has produced good authorities to shew that the wisest of them fell in with

\* P. 116. † P. 394.



the idolatrous worship of their several countries. And what says the gentleman to this? why, that the practice of the philosophers in these cases “does not prove any unavoidable ignorance:” they might know that this worship was wrong, but not think it safe or prudent to attack the reigning superstition. Be all this admitted (for it is not worth disputing) did they, I ask, know what was right? if he says they did, let him produce his authorities to vouch for what he says: or if he thinks reason can decide this point, let him now shew what manner of outward worship it is which all men are precisely directed to by the law of nature. I have very little expectation that the gentleman will ever engage in any such attempt as this, because he does as good as tell us, that there can be no such thing as one general, uniform way of external worship; for, says he, † “since external adoration cannot be performed but by external signs, these must be different in different places; because what are marks of respect in one country,

† P. 395.



are marks of disrespect in another, or at least look ridiculous." It is true, the outward tokens of civility are, in many respects, different in different countries; but what has religion to do with such trifles as these! I am sorry the gentleman has no better notion of worshipping God, than he has of pulling off his hat, or making a bow, at some great man's levee; and, if it would not be too great an offence, I would desire him, for once, to go to the Gospel, and see whether the worship it prescribes deserves to be treated in this manner. We are there commanded to assemble ourselves together, to confess our sins to God, to pray to him for what we want, to give thanks to him for what we have received; to hear that holy word, in which we are by the most weighty considerations exhorted and admonished to repent and amend, and to commemorate the mercy of our redemption from a state of sin and death by the frequent communion of the body and blood of Christ. All these several acts of religion have in them the nature of external signs, no doubt: but then they are something more;



for, the state of a man who accustoms himself to a serious and regular attendance upon them, is a state of perpetual discipline, by which conscience is always kept upon its guard, to acquit us when we do well; and to reproach and condemn us when we do evil; and to put us upon that vigorous opposition of ourselves to flesh and blood which is necessary to carry us through the temptations of the world, which never can prevail but when conscience sleeps, and those considerations which should support virtue grow faint and languid upon the mind. This is one great use of external worship; in all which it is plain, that there is nothing which is not in all places alike proper; nothing which will not to all persons be alike useful and beneficial; especially if we take into the account that supernatural assistance of the spirit of God, which (as Dr. Clarke teaches in many places) under the Christian dispensation, they who sincerely endeavour to obey the will of God have encouragement to hope for (in consequence of the use of these ordinances) upon all necessary occasions. I speak this only to  
shew



shew the objector's absurdity in treating outward worship as a mere formality, not capable, in the nature of it, of being reduced to any common rules. But, setting apart every thing that is peculiar to the Christian religion, I will only ask this general question, viz. Since it is admitted that there ought to be some external worship, and reason directs to no one particular method, as what all men are precisely obliged to follow, how shall the particular method be determined? the objector tells us, that “\* this should be left to human discretion, and that men are to do it in the most convenient way, by appointing among themselves time, place, persons, and all other things which require special determination.” What sense there is in this, let any man of ordinary apprehension judge. Man is confessedly ignorant and corrupted : in consequence of this, we now suppose that he is become obnoxious to the justice of God, and wants to be put into a method, whereby, his conscience being awakened, and his passions restrain-

\* P. 116.



ed, he may attain to such a degree of reformation as God will accept, in lieu of that obedience which he is no longer able to pay. Under this state of the case, the gentleman, it seems, thinks it most reasonable and proper, not that God should prescribe a method for him, but that he should prescribe one for himself! If it were left to the objector's discretion to settle a publick religion for his countrymen, it is probable he would take care it should be a very easy one; and I am afraid it is too natural to us all in such cases as these, to be inclined to lay as little as possibly we can upon ourselves; the greater the corruption of mankind is supposed to be, the greater restraints will be necessary, in order to bring them to a sober sense of themselves; and yet it is plain, that they will be so much the less disposed to submit to any restraint at all: and I doubt not, but that in many parts of the world the case is so bad, as that it would be as reasonable to expect, that a person disordered in his understanding should prescribe to himself a proper diet, and put himself under proper degrees of confinement, as that they should



should determine for themselves any proper measures for their own reformation. In general, if we will judge by reason, and not by passion, we must perceive that in affairs of this sort, mankind will always be most secure under the direction of God, who best knows the wants of his creatures; and amidst that infinite variety of methods which may be prescribed, can never be deceived in judging what, all circumstances considered, is fittest to be prescribed; nor is it hard to understand, that a religion supported by the express authority of God, must have a much more forcible influence upon the behaviour of men, than any religion of mere human appointment possibly can have; as they may absolutely depend upon his approbation, if they comply with it, and his displeasure, if they neglect and despise it. These, I think, are no unreasonable suppositions; that God is wiser than men, and knows much better than they do, what course it is best to take with them, to lead them back to a sense of their duty; and that many will reverence what they know or believe to come from God, who may be disposed to pay  
little



little regard to what mere human prudence recommends. But the objector, instead of attending to such natural observations as these, spends much of his own and his reader's time, in complaining of I know not what “† handle that designing men may take (if the authority of God be laid down as the foundation and rule of external worship) to impose upon weak persons what they please, on pretence of divine right.” Upon this topick many pages are spent; but what does it all amount to? much mischief may be done by pretenders of all sorts, of which this gentleman himself is not the least example; but how comes this to be an objection against Revelation? has not physick produced quacks, law pettyfoggers, mathematicks conjurers and fortune-tellers? what then? will you expel the arts and sciences out of the world, because they have been made use of by knaves to abuse fools? nay (to come nearer to the gentleman's point) has not reason itself been abused? must we then argue, that it came not from God? or if you

† P. 116, &amp;c.



say that God ought not to have given revelation, foreseeing the ill uses that would often be made of it, may not the same thing be said of his giving reason to men? The gentleman tells us of many superstitions that have been grafted in Christian countries upon the general laws of the Gospel relating to religious worship; and I can tell him of many more; but cannot he tell as long and as dismal a tale of much worse superstitions practised in other places, where no divine appointments have given the handle he complains of? or can he tell, that if God had given no laws about religion, but had left it to particular persons, or particular families, or particular communities (for by which of these ways religion is to be settled, he has not told us) to appoint among themselves the most convenient method, some consistent, rational, and useful manner of publick worship or other would generally have been pursued? He may say this, if he pleases, with the same ease that he has said a great many other as incredible things; but if he should undertake to prove, that human reason is a better guide in these matters than

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Revelation, he will be hard put to it to deal with this certain observation, that no instance can be given of any heathen country, where the human inventions and constitutions relating to publick worship have not been subversive of all true religion.

I have now done with the two points, which the objector has given me occasion to consider; and upon the whole, I hope it will appear to reasonable judges, that the inference that Dr. Clarke has drawn in his 7th proposition, that "there was plainly wanting a divine Revelation to recover mankind out of their universally degenerate state," is a very just one. Allowing these principles, that men wanted to be instructed, and yet that there were none sufficiently qualified to instruct them; that they wanted to be encouraged to repentance and reformation by the assurance of pardon, and yet that none could give any certain assurance to repentance; that as a check to that inadvertency and want of attention, which is apt to render the best motives ineffectual, they wanted to be frequently reminded by some outward rules of religious worship, and yet that they were



were in no sort qualified to prescribe such a method to themselves : These principles, I say, allowed, the conclusion must follow of course. Here then I leave this point ; and will go on to answer some few general objections, which the gentleman has scattered up and down in his book, in prejudice to Dr. Clarke's system in general. The objector is so little an observer of order and coherence, that it will be difficult to reduce these observations to any just method : but the chief of them, I think, will fall under one or other of the following questions, viz.

“ 1. Whence came this corruption, which is made the foundation of the want of Revelation ? or, why did God bring a race of creatures into being, whom he foresaw would fall into so deplorable a state ?” Setting aside the Scripture account of this case (which a deist cannot be supposed to admit) to the first part of this question I answer, that man being made a rational agent, capable of discerning between good and evil ; and a free agent, capable of acting or of forbearing ; the cause of this general corruption must originally be resolved



solved into his own voluntary choice, who wanted not either means to know, or power to fulfil, what God required ; but was diverted (by what means it is not necessary now to enquire, but was in fact diverted) from following that light which nature had afforded him. Whether in consequence of this original corruption, and under some particular circumstances of the world, some might not be unavoidably ignorant of the plainest duties, is a question neither necessary, nor possible to be determined with any certainty, as I have before observed : nor is it needful (if it were possible) to say, why God brought such a race of creatures into being. For what have these questions to do with the use and advantages of Revelation ? that the state of mankind was miserably corrupted the argument supposes, and is in fact true ; and in order to recover them from this corrupted state, we say, and have proved, that Revelation was necessary : if now you will say, that God ought not to have suffered mankind to fall into this corrupted state ; this has no manner of tendency to shew, that the corrupted state of man being supposed, Revelation



velation was not necessary to recover them out of it, but only to impeach the providence of God. The objector says, that to suppose that God † “forefaw this corruption, and the consequences of it (and foresee it he certainly did) is to suppose that he brought mankind into being out of spite and hatred.” For the decency of the language, let the gentleman answer; and for the reasoning he ought also to answer, if he has any regard for natural religion: for the objection falls as hard upon natural religion, as it does upon revealed, and in truth something harder; since natural religion sees the evil, but has no remedy for it; Revelation sees it, and has provided for its cure. Whatever else he may object to the Gospel, he cannot object this corruption; for the Gospel did not make this corruption, but found it: and therefore the difficulty lies against God’s creating man, but certainly cannot lie against redeeming him. For what will you say? man was brought into being; man was thus corrupted: was there any spite or ha-

† P. 375.



tered in rescuing him from this corruption? no, surely! But it may be asked,

“ 2. Could it serve to any good purpose, for God to restore mankind from this corruption by offering them new light?”

The gentleman has started many difficulties, which, if they have any meaning, tend to shew that it could not. As this objection strikes at the root of Christianity, and (as I took notice heretofore) unhinges Dr. Clarke's system all at once, it is necessary it should be considered. I shall begin with his most general observations.

Speaking then of the state mankind was in before the preaching of the Gospel, he says, that † “ if they had not power when fallen to recover themselves, and it was not their fault that they at first were in, and after remained in a state of universal degeneracy and corruption, this must then be the state God designed they should be in; and it would seem not only to be in vain, but a crime in them to endeavour to change that state, in which God of his infinite wisdom and goodness thought fit to

† P. 375.



place them." Setting aside his sneer against Providence, to the argument I thus answer :

That the corruption of mankind (as before observed) was originally owing to the abuse of man's liberty ; and that so long as this liberty subsisted, and so far as it extended, it will be absurd to say, that a state of degeneracy and corruption was the state God designed they should be in. Permit it he did (and otherwise he could not do without offering violence to man's liberty ;) but design it he did not, any more than a good father designs that his son (whom he has left to his own conduct) should throw himself into a gaol, or bring himself and his family to beggary. But let us suppose the corruption begun, and growing every age worse and worse, till at length ignorance and wickedness had (by evil education and vicious habits) taken such deep root, that liberty was greatly impaired, and there was no possibility of recovering without new and supernatural assistance from God : upon this state of the case, it must indeed be in vain for man to attempt his own reformation : but  
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why must it be a crime? why (says he) because it was endeavouring to change that state in which God thought fit to place them: he should have said (for it is all that can in truth be said) that it was endeavouring to rescue themselves from that state, into which the providence of God had permitted them to fall through their own and their forefathers wickedness: their own wickedness, I say, as well as their forefathers; for in none has human liberty been so much impaired, as not to leave them inexcusable in many violations of duty: and (if the gentleman be really in earnest in what he says) I would ask him, how it can possibly be a crime to endeavour to grow better? or, what is there in such an attempt that is not just and praise-worthy, especially if (which was the case of many of the wiser heathens) these endeavours were supported by an humble confidence in the goodness of God, that he in his own time would apply a remedy to that evil, which they found they were not able themselves sufficiently to cure? to argue that it was a crime in men to endeavour to change this state,



state, because God designed they should be in it, is in effect to say, that, separate from all consideration of man's behaviour, God chose it for them, as what he best approved : but God no more designed that mankind should be in this degenerate state, than he designed that first corruption, which was the occasion of it ; that is, he only permitted it : or if the gentleman will say, that there is no difference between God's doing a thing, and permitting or suffering it to be done, he will again break in upon his own religion (as he would have us believe) natural religion, which is more concerned (as has been shewn) in all objections of this sort than Revelation is.

Thus much must be said, that the state of corruption once supposed, God designed that men should continue in it, till such time as he thought fit to apply the proper remedy. I ask then, was it becoming the wisdom and goodness of God to offer a remedy ? why, no ; for he tells us, 1. That “ the happiness of man was the sole end of his creation. 2. That \* all men

\* P. 417.



living up to that light God has given them, are upon a level as to their future happiness. Further, that † God has given to all persons, and at all times, sufficient means of discovering whatever makes for their present and future happiness, or (as he expresses himself elsewhere) ‡ all that happiness their nature is capable of." All this shews, that in the objector's account, no wise or good purpose was to be served by any offers of new and better light to reform the world ; and some passages there are, in which he declares that Revelation will do more hurt than good : for he says, that || "if we suppose any arbitrary commands in the Gospel (and such in his account are all commands, which are not original duties of natural religion) we place Christians in a worse condition than those under no law but that of nature—and consequently the greatest part of mankind---are in a better condition, as to the next world, than Christians, because they do not hazard the favour of God by any mistakes or omissions in such matters."

† P. 362, 363.

‡ P. 393, 409.

|| P. 125.

Again;



Again; † “to suppose some men, who tho’ they exactly obey the law of nature, may yet be punished even eternally for not obeying another law besides, would be to make God deal infinitely less mercifully with them, than with those that have no other law---and I may add, that even as to temporal happiness, they who think original and traditional religion don’t differ, (i. e. they who throw every thing out of religion but the mere natural law) are in the better state---as having nothing required of them, but what they most evidently see tends to their good, and consequently are free (no small happiness) from all panick fears, &c.” The gentleman thinks (and so far he is in the right) That to be the best religion, which provides best against the fears of divine vengeance : but how would he have this provision made ? by taking away offence and transgression ? no, but by taking away the law ; for the fewer the laws (says he) the less the hazard of offending. These are the genuine maxims of Epicurus ; and destroy all systems

† P. 125.



of religion, revealed or not revealed : they shew, if they shew any thing, that there ought to have been no such thing as law or liberty ; for law and liberty supposed, there will always be a foundation for fears, always a hazard of offending. Let us then examine a little into these principles.

The first is, that the happiness of man was the sole end of his creation. This the gentleman perpetually takes for granted ; but it is so far from wanting no proof, that in truth it is not capable of any ; and by what we are able to judge from that little we know of the works of Providence, the case is otherwise. Consider man under the abstracted notion of a creature, and there is no more reason to say, that his happiness was the sole end of his creation, than there is to say the same thing of any other creature made capable of happiness : and yet we see plainly, that beasts are made serviceable to the uses of men ; and since this use is necessary for man, no doubt it was intended in their creation. There is not indeed any order of beings which bears any such relation to man, as man does to the race of brutes : but there  
may



may be (and doubtless is) a relation between man and other created beings, which we know not of, which conspires to make up the harmony of the whole system. Dr. Clarke therefore says very truly and consistently, that † “we know not the design of God in creating mankind ;” that is, we know not the Whole of it : for though he supposes that God created man (as he did all other intelligent beings) to communicate to them his happiness ; yet this doth not exclude all farther views which God might have with respect to the whole frame and constitution of things, in virtue of which it became fitting and proper that man should be, what in fact he is, superior to all other parts of the known creation. If therefore the happiness of man was the sole end of his creation, mere happiness certainly was not so, but happiness in some certain posture, order, or situation of being. Now whatever was the foundation of this order, i. e. whatever cause moved the eternal Author of all things to place us in that degree of excellency,

† P. 289.

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which is proper to us as men, and gives us a superiority above many other creatures; it may very justly be presumed to be as agreeable to his wisdom and goodness to restore us when we were fallen from our original perfection, as it was at first to bring us into being. In other words: if there were wise reasons, why at first God made us men and not brutes, there may certainly be as wise and as good reasons, why after we had debased ourselves more or less towards the condition of brutes, he should again restore us to the dignity of our natures.

This consideration suggests to us a possible use of Revelation, setting apart all regard to the happiness of man. For if it were said, that man's happiness would have been as well provided for under lesser light, as under greater; still it cannot be denied, that there might be other reasons of Providence respecting the general order and system of things, which might make the reformation of mankind proper and necessary---But our cause wants not this support; and it will be more material perhaps to enquire, what foundation there is  
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for what the gentleman advances in his next general principle, viz. that “all men living up to that light God has given them, are upon a level as to their happiness, whether present or future.” It might reasonably be demanded in the first place, who those are that live up to the light that God has given them? if there are none such (and none certainly there are, who in many things have not offended) the question will still return (not to be answered upon any principles of natural religion) what shall they do to atone for their wilful transgressions? It might farther be observed, that allowing that virtue to sincerity which the gentleman contends for, the Gospel may still be supposed to be useful, and (considering the proneness of mankind to offend) even necessary to lead them to act with sincerity. It is very certain, and Dr. Clarke supposes, that the cause of the corruption of mankind in many cases was not owing to the want of proper light to instruct them better, but for want of a will and resolution to do what the reason and understanding imparted to them by God, shewed them plainly enough they ought



ought to do : and when God vouchsafed the Gospel, he did not barely give new light, and then leave men absolutely to themselves to use or to neglect it ; but furnished them with such helps as were proper to engage their attention, and to awaken them into such an habitual sense of their duties, as that, so far as was consistent with human liberty, this light should not be vouchsafed in vain. But after all, I do not see what reason there is for that confidence with which the gentleman asserts, that greater or lesser degrees of light and knowledge make no difference as to man's happiness. It will be allowed, I presume, by all reasonable judges, that man is naturally made capable of more happiness than brutes : whence this difference ? is it not from those faculties by which he is distinguished from brutes ? now if this advantage on the part of man arises from those faculties, which are proper to him as man, it must (naturally) bear a proportion to the extent and improvement of those faculties ; so that (all special reasons set apart) the greater knowledge added to the greater virtue must be attended with the greater



greater degrees of happiness; and greater knowledge (in those points, I mean, in which moral duties are concerned) will always be a good foundation for greater virtue. Now this advantage the light of the Gospel yields, viz. that it not only sets before us the duties of natural religion in the best and the plainest manner, but furnishes us also with such helps and motives to all virtuous improvements, as the mere light of reason could not administer. This, I think, has been already shewn; so that the Gospel (naturally) must be a means of promoting man's happiness both in this life and in the next: in this life, as it is plain from experience, that in proportion as the duties of natural religion are more generally and more closely adhered to, the world will generally be so much the happier; and in the next, because a future state being intended as the reward of virtue, our happiness there must be supposed to have a great dependance upon our improvement here. These, I think, are very plain and easy deductions; and how the gentleman will be able to support his general principle, that greater or lesser degrees



degrees of light make no difference as to man's happiness, let him consider. The only true thing he has said upon the subject happens to be nothing to the purpose, which is this, that no man can be \* accountable to God for more than the light vouchsafed him has enabled him to perform : the consequence of which is only this, that if God had never offered the Gospel to mankind, those who lived up to the knowledge they had, should have been accepted, as having done all that they were bound to do : but this will not prove that, now the Gospel is offered, mankind are not, or may not be, the happier for it ; unless you will say, that all who are not chargeable with guilt, are therefore equally happy ; which were to confound all orders and degrees of happiness in the world, and to level the condition of men with the condition of stocks and stones.

His last general principle under this head is, that the Gospel, by multiplying laws, has encreased the hazard of offending ; which is just as good an objection against

\* P. 414.



all the wise and wholesome laws in the world, as it is against the Gospel. The more laws there are, the more obligations there must be ; and the more obligations there are, the more particular instances there must also be, against which you may possibly transgress : and yet laws (be they many, or be they few) may be so contrived that mankind shall be the better and the happier for them, or government is the most idle thing in nature. I desire the gentleman to consider a little what those laws of the Gospel are which give him so much uneasiness, and to what purpose they were intended to serve. He calls them arbitrary commands ; but it has been shewn that all the laws of the Gospel have a direct tendency to promote natural religion ; and will you then say that natural religion is less secure, by means of the Gospel ? or can the hazard of breaking any law be increased by those very methods which have a direct tendency to lead men to observe it ? It is true, men may transgress the law of religion, in spite of all the means provided by the Gospel ; but even in this case the Gospel offers a remedy, which



which the law of nature does not provide. What then is the ground of all these complaints? why, the laws of the Gospel may be mistaken: very well; and so men may mistake any other laws, and daily do so. But let us suppose the worst, and say, that they are mistaken: What follows? why (says the objector) eternal damnation. Where did he learn this? not from the principles of natural religion, according to which, he says, men are not accountable for their mistakes; nor yet (as I am persuaded) from the Gospel. If men wilfully break the laws of the Gospel, it can be no objection, I hope, that God will inflict the penalty: but if men offend ignorantly, there is just the same room for equitable allowances under the Gospel, as there would have been without the Gospel; and Revelation, though it prescribes laws to man, yet does not set bounds to the mercies of God.—But if restoring mankind from his corrupted state is of such advantage, it may be asked,

3. Why did not God administer the remedy at all times and to all persons? What if this question is not to be answered?



ed? will it follow, that Revelation was not wanting, or that it is the less useful to those to whom it is vouchsafed? If of two poor men you relieve but one, can it be said that one is not relieved? or shall he, because the other was left unprovided, throw the money back in his benefactor's face, and say, I have no occasion for it? The comparison reaches so far, I think, as to shew, that if it can be proved by good reasons that Revelation is a necessary means to reform mankind, the want of universality ought never to be admitted in prejudice against its being received where-ever it is offered: and indeed the objection, if it has any weight in it, falls not upon Revelation, but upon the author of Revelation. But in vain it is urged against one or the other: for, as Dr. Clarke has observed, † “though the consideration of the manifest corruption of human nature shews the want of a divine Revelation---it does not follow from hence, either that God is absolutely bound to make such a Revelation; or, that if he makes it, it must be

† P. 316.

equally



equally made to all men." Were the granting a Revelation an act of justice, it must have been made to all men; but as it is an act of mercy, God was at liberty to shew it sooner or later, to all, or to some, according as he in his wisdom saw would be most agreeable to the settled rules and measures of his providence.

In answer to all this, the gentleman asks, † "what other reason have we to say God is obliged to do any one thing whatever, but that it is agreeable to the natural notions we have of his wisdom and goodness, and to the dictates of nature and reason for him so to do?" The occasion of his asking this question is, because Dr. Clarke has said, that "it was agreeable to the dictates of nature and right reason, to expect or hope for a divine Revelation;" and his intention is to deny that there is any distinction to be made between justice and mercy in God. To clear this difficulty, let it be observed, that, strictly speaking, God does nothing but what he is obliged to do; that is, nothing but what, accord-

† P. 401.



ing to the eternal relations of things, is fit and reasonable to be done. But do but take this along with you (which one would think it were no easy matter for a man to mistake) that the infinite wisdom of God comprehends the eternal relations or fitnesses of All things, whilst human knowledge is confined to some few instances; and the distinction between justice and mercy will be plain beyond contradiction. What we mean when we say God is obliged to do a thing, is, that he cannot do otherwise without contradicting the eternal reasons of things; which supposes, in those instances, that the understanding of man is an adequate measure of those reasons, as, in many cases, certainly it is: as, if God commands a man to see, it must be supposed that he has eyes; if to run, that he has legs, and the like; because the relations of things are thus far certainly known to us, that it is absurd to require the end where the necessary means are wanting: this therefore is what we term justice; but there are other cases, in which the relations of things, though they are known to God, are not apparent to us: as, suppose



pose a man wants any thing, which if he had it would be much for his advantage; God may give it him if he pleases: and if to his wisdom it seems fit and reasonable, we may in some sense say that he will find himself obliged to do it: yet, since this man's wants are not the single rule of God's actions, and there may possibly be reasons unknown to him, but known to God, why he should not supply them; should God refuse to supply them, he would have nothing to impeach him with; and therefore if God does supply them he will call it mercy. Consider justice and mercy as they subsist in man, and they will be found distinguishable exactly in the same manner: if I borrow a shilling of another man, and refuse to pay it, this is injustice; because the reason why I ought to pay it is plain and visible: but if I ask a shilling of another man as a gift, circumstances may be so put that if he refuses to give it me, he shall stand condemned before God and his own conscience, as having done a wrong thing: and yet, because my wants are not the sole rule of his behaviour, and every man is supposed to



to be the best judge in what way to dispose of his own property, if he does give it me, it will not be justice, but mercy.

It is no unreasonable demand then, I hope, if we expect that the same deference should be paid in this case to the wisdom of God, that is due in like cases to the judgment of man: and this is all that Dr. Clarke means. He supposes that the wants of mankind, in consequence of their corrupted state, were such as afforded a reasonable ground for them to “wish and hope” (pray mind the words, for they are the doctor’s own) that God would grant them a Revelation: but he does not go so far as to say, that the reasons are such, as that supposing God had not granted a Revelation, we could have impeached him for it, and shewn that he had acted contrary to what is right and fitting. The reasons, as they appear to us, are so strong in favour of Revelation, “as to lead a wise man to think it very probable that the infinitely merciful and good God would actually vouchsafe to afford such supernatural assistance:” this Dr. Clarke says; but that we could have been absolutely certain, antece-

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dently, or from the nature and reasons of things, that there neither were, nor could be, any such circumstances respecting the general and settled rules of Providence, as would make That, which, the wants of mankind only considered, appeared right and fitting, to be upon some other accounts wrong and unfitting; this Dr. Clarke does not say; nor can any one say who is in his right senses: upon experience of what God has done, we may reasonably enough conclude what it was fit for him to do; but without this experience we could have known nothing with any certainty.

To come now close to our point: if, for ought that appears from the nature of things, God might, without any impeachment of his Providence, have denied us any Revelation at all; how can the nature of things shew, that if he does think fit to grant it, he is obliged to grant it to all persons, and at all times? the gentleman will answer perhaps, that the same reasons which make it fit that he should grant it to some, make it as fit that he should grant it to others: but how does he know this? that the same reasons which shew it to be  
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necessary for some, will shew it to be as necessary for others, may be granted : but since the necessities of men are not (as before observed) the sole rule of God's actions, it is plain that this consideration will not shew, that God is obliged to reveal himself alike at all times, and to all persons ; upon supposition that there may be reasons of Providence unknown to us, which make a different method more fit and proper. Will the gentleman now pretend to say, that it is impossible that there can be any such reasons ? consistently with common sense, and his own concession, he cannot say it ; for he grants that \* “ we have no knowledge of the whole scheme, order, and state of things ; ” the necessary consequence of which is, that we can have no perfect knowledge of the several reasons of Providence which arise from that order ; and yet this really lies at the bottom of all that he has said : for what else can be the meaning of such bold expostulations as these ? † “ what human legislator, if he found a defect in his laws, and thought it

\* P. 384.

† P. 399.



for the good of his subjects to add new laws, would not promulgate them to all his people? or what parent would act after so partial a manner, as the doctor in a self-confounding scheme supposes the common parent of mankind has done; and not let all his children know, as soon as possible, what was for their common good?" of what weight, I ask, are these and a hundred such questions more, unless you suppose that we are as competent judges of the affairs of Providence, as we are of the affairs of this world; and can as certainly tell what it is right for God to do in the government of the universe, as what it is right for a king to do in the government of his subjects, or for a parent and master to do in the ordering of his family? one would be tempted to think, that the author himself went upon this supposition, by the many peremptory declarations he has given us of God's designs. To instance in a few passages before quoted. † "The design of God in communicating any thing of himself to men was their happiness---

† P. 393.



this design, he says, obliged him at all times alike to communicate it to them. A little after he says, that God at all times intended mankind that happiness their nature is capable of---and therefore he says, that † the common parent of mankind has given all his children, even those of the lowest capacities, and at all times, sufficient means of discovering whatever makes for their present and future happiness." Surely so many and so great absurdities are not easy to be met with in the compass of so few words ! that the happiness of man is one end of all the dispensations of Providence with respect to man is true, and Dr. Clarke always supposes it ; yet he does not suppose, nor is it right to suppose, that mere happiness is the end of God's dispensations with regard to man, or any other creature ; but happiness (as I said before) under some certain posture, order, and situation of being. This is evident from the different orders of beings that are in the world, and the different degrees of happiness allotted to different creatures of the

† P. 362, 363.



same species : for if mere happiness were the only thing intended, all creatures would have had the same perfections, all the same degrees of happiness : for one invariable design of Providence must have produced one invariable effect. This being observed, let us examine a little the particulars that follow, “ God (says the objector) at all times intended mankind that happiness (that is, † all that happiness) their nature is capable of.” If he means, that man was sent into this world only to please himself, it is easy to understand what he means by, what he so often talks of, following nature : but let me ask him this question, Is he in want of any thing ? if he is not, he may meet with hundreds every day that are, and who consequently have not all the happiness their nature is capable of. To what purpose then is it to tell us, that God intended a thing, which fact and experience shews us he did not intend, or (which it is absurd to suppose of God in any case where his own power alone is concerned) that if he did intend, he intended it in

† See P. 409.



vain ? If God intended mankind at all times all that happiness their nature is capable of, || “ we must allow (says the objector) that at all times he has given them the means of obtaining it by the rules he has prescribed them for their conduct.” Very well, Sir ! and is it true then that God has at all times given these means ? with respect to the present happiness, it is certainly not true ; and why must it needs be true with respect to the future ? or why is it not consistent with our natural notions of God to suppose, that as he has constituted different states and degrees of happiness for men in this life, so he may have ordained as great a diversity in the next ? but why does the gentleman stop with saying, “ that God intended to mankind, at all times, all that happiness their nature is capable of ? ” Would it not be just as good sense to go a step farther, and say, that he intended to give them a nature capable of enjoying all the happiness Omnipotence could bestow ? the true consequence of which principle would be this, that no

|| P. 393.

time



time would be assignable in which mankind did not exist in a state capable of enjoying the most perfect happiness ; and what is said of mankind may as well be said of all other created beings in the universe that are capable of happiness. But this again is false in fact and experience : for though no time can be assigned, in which God could not have created the world, if he had pleased ; yet an eternity had passed before he did in fact create it ; and though he could have made all creatures capable of the most perfect happiness, yet he has in fact placed them in different ranks and degrees with regard to happiness. If any will presume to say, that this order of the world contradicts the reason and fitness of things, and ought to have been otherwise, they are not deists, but atheists ; and with such at present I have nothing to do : for it must be remembered, that the argument sets out upon the supposition of the being of a God (that is, of a wise and good creator and governor of the world) as a principle allowed on both sides. This admitted, let the gentleman tell me, why God was obliged to dispense



penſe the happineſs of the redemption (in his phraſe) as ſoon as poſſible, any more than he was obliged to diſpenſe the happineſs of the creation as ſoon as poſſible? or why, when in creating the world he was at liberty to deal out happineſs gradually and unequally among his creatures, he may not in reſtoring the world be allowed, if he pleaſes, to purſue the ſame meaſures? Theſe are queſtions proper to be aſked in this caſe, and which I ſhall leave the objector to conſider of at his leiſure: and if he has but that humility and honeſty of mind, which may be learned from that natural religion which he talks much of, but (I fear) little underſtands, I am perſuaded he will not find it difficult to ſee the true anſwer.

As to what he ſays farther, that “the common parent of mankind has given all his children, even thoſe of the loweſt capacities, and at all times, ſufficient means of diſcovering (for themſelves, I imagine, and without any help or information from others) whatever makes for their preſent and future happineſs:” This indeed is a maſterly ſtroke, and ſtrikes at the bottom:  
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it sets aside human laws as well as divine, and will make the judge and the justice as insignificant as the parson of the parish. But let us consider in other instances, how able men of the lowest capacity are to provide for their present happiness. Health is certainly one of those things which make for a man's present happiness; yet there are many of so low a capacity, as not to be able to discover how to cure themselves of any distemper. Riches, I suppose, may be reckoned another; yet there are many who know not either how to get an estate, or how to keep it, without the assistance of others, who see farther than themselves; and so in a hundred other instances, which any child can help him to. Now if God has not given to every man sufficient means to discover for himself every thing that makes for the happiness of this life, why must it needs be said, that he has given to every man sufficient means to discover whatever makes for his happiness in the next? But take mankind with all the help that he can procure; all that can with any reason or truth be said is this, that God has given to every man sufficient means to come at so much



much happiness, as he in his wisdom, from time to time, and at all times, thought fit to bestow upon him : and that any consequence will follow from hence in prejudice to Revelation, let the objector shew when he is able. It may be asked,

4 “ How can Revelation be esteemed a proper remedy to the corruptions of mankind, when this effect is so little seen in experience ?” Upon this argument the objector seems to triumph. † “ If (says he) Revelation was absolutely necessary to recover mankind out of their universally degenerate and corrupted state, and replace them in a state suitable to the original dignity of their nature---must not Revelation have had its intended effect, and made Christians---much more perfect and excellent than men could possibly be when under times of unavoidable corruption ? and yet the doctor, having taken a large passage from Cicero, where the orator very rhetorically describes the great corruptions of his time---makes this remark, that a livelier description of the present corrupt

† P. 402.



state of human nature is not easy to be met with ; which, I think, is sufficiently owning that human nature at present is far from being exalted to so high a state of perfection, or in the least mended." The gentleman thinks, it seems, that notwithstanding the supposed virtue of the Gospel to reform mankind, the world is not one jot the better for it ; and he would be very glad to persuade you that Dr. Clarke was of the same opinion. But what does the doctor say ? why, that the description which Cicero gave of human nature in his time, agrees with the corrupted state of mankind in this : very well ; and whoever looks into the passage of Cicero cited by Dr. Clarke, will find that it does. But what then ? did the doctor mean to say, that the state of mankind is not in the least mended by the coming in of the Gospel ? no such matter : he speaks here of human nature as such, or abstracted from any influence or improvement from the Gospel ; and in this sense it is certain that human nature is now, and was then, exactly the same : but so far is he from affirming that in fact and experience mankind have received

no



no benefit from the Gospel, that he maintains the direct contrary, and that in the strongest terms. ‡ “ We may (says he) safely appeal, even to our adversaries themselves, whether the testimony of Christ--- concerning the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments of a future state, have not had (notwithstanding all the corruptions of Christianity) visibly, in experience and effect, a greater and more powerful influence upon the lives and actions of men, than the reasonings of all the philosophers that ever were in the world--- Whether in Christian countries (at least where Christianity is professed in any tolerable degree of purity) the generality, even of the meaner and most vulgar and ignorant people, have not truer and worthier notions of God, more just and right apprehensions concerning his attributes and perfections, a deeper sense of the difference of good and evil, a greater regard to moral obligations, and to the plain and most necessary duties of life, and a more firm and universal expectation of a future

‡ P. 311.



state of rewards and punishments, than in any heathen country any considerable number of men were ever found to have had." The doctor is thus far certainly in the right, that the nature of God, and the duties of religion are much better, and more generally understood, in Christian countries than in pagan: and as to practice, though we cannot in this respect say as much in behalf of Christians as we could wish, yet, I hope, there is yet virtue enough left among us to shew that the Gospel has not been (as this gentleman would represent the case) entirely without effect. View the lives of the first Christians, and the power of the Gospel in reforming the manners of men will be visible beyond contradiction: and if the Gospel has not now every where a proportionable effect, this will shew indeed that men are grown worse, but the value of the means will be just the same: and, probably, had the Gospel never been published, the world in general would have been by this time in a much more deplorable condition than it is. It is very certain that Christianity, for some hundreds of years, made a considerable reformation in  
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the world, and does so in multitudes every day : and if some corruptions in Christianity have given a handle to bad practices, it is certain there are as bad practices at least in other places, where no such occasion has been administered : so that I cannot see that Christianity has, upon any account, done any hurt to balance against the good ; because those bad men who abuse the Gospel to bad purposes, would certainly have abused natural religion to as bad, and actually do so ; for there is no such thing as abusing the Gospel, without an abuse of natural reason too. We are on this occasion often put in mind of the corruptions of popery, in view of which I presume it is that the gentleman observes, that “ what in most places passes for the Christian religion---has transformed this social and benign creature (man) into one fierce and cruel ; and made him act with such rage and fury against those who never did or designed him the least injury, as could not have entered into the hearts of men to conceive, even though they were in the doctor’s unavoidable state of degeneracy and corruption.” It should be observed  
here,



here, that the objection, as the gentleman himself has stated it, does not lie against the Christian religion, but against what passes for the Christian religion ; that is, not against the Gospel, but against something else, which is mistaken for the Gospel ; and from the corruption of the Gospel, no doubt, much mischief may and does arise. But, pray, Sir, are there more murders and outrages committed in France or Spain, than in Tartary or the Indies ? or, cannot it easily enter into your heart to conceive, that men brutish and savage in their dispositions will find occasions to harass and oppress their fellow creatures, whether they have a religion to quarrel about, or whether they have none ? If you can give instances of cruelties practised in Christian countries, in consequence of mistaken principles grafted upon Christianity, I can give you instances of as great, or greater, practised in other countries where the Gospel is not known : and if, in one case, this is to be admitted, as an argument to shew that Christianity is good for nothing, it must be as good proof, in the other, that reason is good for nothing neither.



ther. It is very certain, that as multitudes every where use the reason given them by God, they would have been, if not more useful, at least, more harmless creatures without it : but as the universal destruction of reason would infer a much greater evil, so would the abolishing the Gospel ; it would put an end to some particular grievances, of which the Gospel has been made the occasion by ignorant or wicked men, but it would open the way to a greater and more general depravity. I leave this point upon the judgment of every impartial reader ; and shall only observe, that if the gentleman could prove (as well as assert) that the corruptions of the Gospel ‡ “ have been more fatal to the happiness of mankind than all the superstitions of the pagan world,” nothing would follow from it which can stand as any just prejudice against the Gospel : it will shew (as I said before) the badness of mankind, not the impropriety of the means, which (in all cases where free-agency is concerned) has no dependence upon the effect as in fact it

‡ P. 407.



is, but as in reason it might and ought to have been. You may say, indeed, that God, who foresaw that these means would not prove effectual, might have provided other means that should; and so he might: but to all objections of this sort it will be a sufficient answer to say, that God is wiser than men, and it belongs to none but himself to determine how far it is proper for him to go, and where he is to stop, in such cases as these. It may be asked,

5. Whether, since it is allowed on all hands that the Gospel itself is greatly corrupted; and in most, if not all places where it is professed, comes much short of its intended effect, we may not as reasonably plead for the necessity of a new Revelation, to remedy these corruptions, as we have pleaded for this Revelation to remedy the corruptions of natural religion? The objector, speaking of the vile maxims of some Christians, asks, † “what less than a new Revelation can expose their expositions, and explain away their explanations of the present Revelation?” and

† P. 406, 407.



a little after he says, “ we have no great reason to hope it will ever be so well with mankind, but that there will always be too much room for such arguments as the doctor urges from the corruptions of mankind, for new Revelations.” What he would have us understand by these remarks, I presume is this, that it is not reasonable to suppose that there will for ever be a necessity of new Revelations ; and yet that, according to Dr. Clarke’s way of arguing, we have little reason to hope for the contrary ; that is, we have little reason to hope that the world will ever be so free from corruption, as not to afford occasion, to those who are willing to make use of it, to argue for the want of new Revelations. To this objection I give this short and plain answer, viz. that if the Christian world is not yet bad enough, it may in time be bad enough to make a new Revelation necessary ; and that even now, it would be unreasonable to reject any further Revelation which might be offered as coming from God, merely upon a pretence that no farther Revelation is wanting. The objector seems to be too fond of the disease to wish



for a cure ; but those who understand the value of true religion would be glad to see it so prevail, that the whole earth may be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the seas. Then, and not till then (so far as we can judge) will there be an end of all use of farther Revelations. The gentleman's hopes, you see, will not carry him so far. I wonder not at it ; for natural religion affords no such hopes as these : but the Gospel, which foresaw these corruptions, has also foretold the remedy, and teaches us to look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ; previous to which, there will be another great and more glorious manifestation of the Son of Man. When this revolution will happen we cannot tell ; for to us it belongs not to know the times and the seasons, which the father has put in his own power : but come it will ; and at such a time are we taught to expect it, when the Son of Man shall not find faith upon the earth : these gentlemen therefore may possibly be preparing the way to this great change ; how much to their own profit it behoves them to consider.

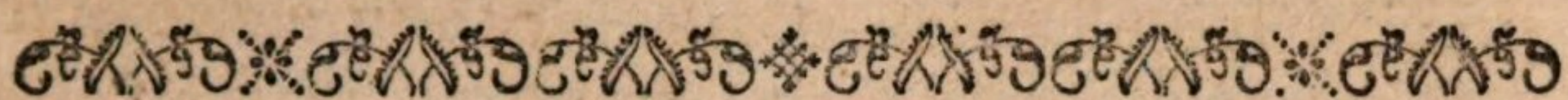


I have now done with the argument so far as Dr. Clarke is concerned in it, and shall conclude with one observation relating to the general method in which this writer has attempted to subvert the Gospel. The true method, one would think, were to begin with the evidence, and to see whether it is sufficient, or not sufficient, to bear the weight that is laid upon it : if it is not, the argument against Christianity will come very strongly thus---“ The Gospel wants sufficient evidence to prove it to be a Revelation---therefore we are not bound to accept it as such.” But this gentleman drops all consideration of the evidence, and argues thus :---“ the Gospel is unnecessary and useless---therefore there can be no evidence for it.” No doubt, if it could be sufficiently proved, that the granting the Gospel Revelation is unworthy the wisdom and goodness of God, it would follow, that the Gospel could not come from God ; because God cannot do any thing that contradicts wisdom and goodness : but the proofs offered in this case, if they are not direct mistakes, are at best but presumptions ; and be presumptions in any case as strong as they will, the evidence on the other side, if it be plain



and clear, will always be stronger. I say the same thing of all difficulties which affect the internal constitution of the Gospel Revelation, either in the historical, or in the doctrinal parts of it. Many of these are such as will admit of clear and rational solutions, and these are not real difficulties : and if there are some that will not, yet so long as they are but difficulties (that is, so long as there is room to suppose that they might possibly be some way or other accounted for, though for want of sufficient knowledge in some particular circumstances relating to them we cannot account for them) they must give way to plain and direct proof. What I mean to bring you to is this ; that all objections against the Gospel should be considered, not separate from, but in conjunction with, the evidences for it ; and whoever will proceed in this equitable manner, and weigh these things in an even balance one against the other, will, I am persuaded, find these evidences so much to preponderate, that it will appear to be far more reasonable to embrace the Gospel, against all these objections, as a divine Revelation, than, for the sake of such objections, to reject it as an imposture. A





A  
D E F E N C E  
O F T H E  
SCRIPURE HISTORY;

So far as it concerns the resurrection of Jairus's daughter ; the widow of Nain's son ; and Lazarus : in answer to Mr. Woolston's fifth discourse of our Saviour's miracles. --- written in the year 1730.





THE HISTORY OF THE  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
FROM 1681 TO 1800

BY  
D. E. F. M. C. R.  
OF THE  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
HISTORY

It is the intention of the author  
to publish a history of the  
city of Philadelphia, from its  
first settlement to the present  
time. The history will be  
divided into three parts, the  
first of which will contain  
the history of the city from  
1681 to 1730, the second  
from 1730 to 1776, and the  
third from 1776 to the present  
time.

THE HISTORY OF THE  
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A  
D E F E N C E  
O F T H E  
Scripture History, &c.

Y purpose is to consider those three miracles of our Saviour, which Mr. Woolston has thrown together in his fifth discourse, viz. the resurrection of Lazarus, of Jairus's daughter, and the widow of Nain's son; in which that we may proceed in some method, there are two things principally to be attended to as general heads, comprehending, I think, all his objections, viz.

*First,* What appearance these facts have upon the face of the Scripture-History.

*Secondly,*



*Secondly*, What is the evidence, upon which we believe the Scripture-History to be true; and what are the exceptions which this writer has produced against it.

*First* then; let us consider what appearance these facts have upon the face of the Scripture-History; and particularly, “whether in the account of these facts, as they stand recorded by the Evangelists, there appears any such improbabilities, incredibilities, or absurdities as may justly render them suspicious?” Our author is very copious in declaiming upon this head, infomuch that were any one disposed to frame an idea of the New Testament from his general representations of it, he must conclude it to be one continued chain of inconsistencies. What ground there is for this will soon appear, when the particulars of the charge come to be laid before you: in order to it, take the history of these three cases in short as follow.

“Jairus, a man of note among the Jews, having heard of the fame of Jesus as a worker of miracles, comes to him, and with great earnestness desires him to go and heal his daughter, who was at the  
point



point of death. Soon after, there comes a messenger, acquainting him that she was actually dead. Jesus nevertheless goes to the ruler's house, where he finds the minstrels, and the whole family making great lamentation. Hereupon taking with him Peter, and James, and John, and the father and mother of the damsel, he enters into the room where she was laid, and taking her by the hand said, "damsel arise;" and she arose and walked. Matt. ix. 18. Mark v. 22. Luke viii. 41."

"The second history acquaints us that Jesus going to a city called Nain, attended with his disciples and much people, met at the gate of the city, a young man, (the only son of a widow woman) whom they were carrying to his grave: moved with compassion he came and touched the bier, and said "young man arise." And he that was dead sat up and began to speak, and he delivered him to his mother. Luke vii. 11."

"The third and last is to this effect. Lazarus of Bethany, the friend of Jesus, was sick; of which he is presently acquainted by Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. After two days he prepares  
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to go and visit him ; and by the way tells his disciples plainly that Lazarus was dead ; signifying to them his intentions of raising him from the dead : when they came to Bethany, they found that he had been four days laid in the grave : whereupon Jesus, attended with his disciples, and Mary and Martha, and many other Jews, goes to the grave, and having ordered the stone to be taken away, cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus come forth.” And he that was dead came forth with grave cloaths, and his face was bound about with a napkin. And Jesus saith unto them---loose him and let him go. Joh. xi. 1---47.”

These stories at first view seem to be very plain, consistent narratives, containing nothing of absurdity or incredibility ; unless any one thinks it to be an incredible thing that God should be able to raise a dead man to life : but let us hear what this writer has to except against them. His objections (such of them, I mean, as properly fall under the present enquiry) are in number five ; whereof three have a general and common reference to all the cases above mentioned ; and two are peculiar to the case of Lazarus. The



The objections common to all the cases are these, viz. \* 1. “ that none of these three persons said to be raised from the dead, were at all Proper Persons for Jesus to work such a miracle upon in testimony of his divine power.” Jairus’s daughter, it seems, was an insignificant girl ; the widow’s son a youth of no greater importance ; Lazarus, something more considerable, as he was Jesus’s friend ; but not so proper a subject by a great deal as John the Baptist, or many other persons, whom this writer, if he had been advised with, could have recommended for this purpose. 2. “ That neither sacred nor ecclesiastical history † make any mention what became of these three persons after their resurrection ; how long they lived ; or of what Use and Advantage their restored lives were to the church, or to mankind. 3. That || none of these three persons did or could after the return of their souls to their bodies tell any tales of their Separate Existence.” If this writer had not been under very strong inclinations to depreciate the holy Scrip-

\* P. 20 to 27.

† P. 15 to 20.

|| P. 32.

tures,



tures, he would never have imagined that a charge of absurdity could be supported by such wretched cavils as these. He very rightly observes, that the end our Saviour proposed in working these miracles, was to give testimony of his divine power : I desire then that it may be explained, why the raising of these persons from the dead was not as good an evidence of the power of God, as the raising of any other persons would have been ; or of what consequence it is to the setting forth our Saviour's divine power, to be told, how it fared with these persons when they were dead ; where they dwelt ; and what they did after they were again restored to life. That Jesus ought to have raised all that died wherever he came, our writer owns cannot be supposed : two or three instances, says he, will be allowed to be sufficient : here are now three for his purpose ; yet they will not satisfy : and why ? why because Jesus did not think fit to raise just such persons as he would have him to have raised ; an useful magistrate, for instance ; or an industrious merchant ; or a father of a numerous family ; or some other  
person



person of consequence to the commonwealth : how does he know of what consequence these persons were, or were not, to the commonwealth ? or what has the commonwealth to do in such questions as these ? insignificant as these persons were upon other accounts, they are instances, I say, of the power of God. Nor let him be disturbed, as if it were an absurdity that a person should be raised from the dead, and make no discoveries to his friends and acquaintance about the other world : for ought that he can shew to the contrary, these persons did tell their friends and acquaintance all that they knew of it themselves ; but if (which is most likely) they themselves knew nothing, it is very certain that they could tell nothing. The notion of death implies no more than the separation of soul and body ; and by the will of God, the soul may subsist for a time, in a state of insensibility out of the body, as well as it may in the body. But how (he will ask) can it reasonably be supposed to have been the will of God, that these persons should know nothing of a separate state ? would not a report of the  
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condition of departed souls, from those who for a time had had the experience of it, have been a confirmation of that doctrine, which is of the essence of our religion, and an absolute confutation of the Sadduces and Sceptists of that age, and of the Materialists in this? I much doubt whether it would or not; for it is a very hard matter to know what will absolutely confute (in their own opinions, I mean) those who are beforehand determined not to believe: in my apprehension, the evidence of a future state upon the foot it now stands, is as good as it needs to be; and I am not sure, if Lazarus had known, and St. John had particularly related as from him, what was the state of the dead, I am not sure, I say, that this writer himself would have believed it one jot the sooner: but it is not worth while to dispute this point with him; let the advantage of the evidence for a future state be as great upon this supposition as he is pleased to have it; I ask him this plain question, can he prove that God was bound to give such evidence? or can he even shew, that upon some accounts, it would  
not



not have been inconsistent with the wisdom of his providence, to have given such evidence ? till he can do this, he has no right to suppose that these dead persons knew any thing at all of a separate state, or, if they did know any thing, were permitted to declare it. The silence of the sacred history, as to this matter, is therefore ridiculously alledged as an argument against the credibility of these relations ; for since Christ came to teach us all things necessary to religion, how will you account for his silence in these points ? was not there more reason to expect a distinct account of the other world from Christ himself, than from the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow, or from Lazarus ?

But the writer objects farther ; why have we no accounts, what became of these persons after they were raised from the dead ? the reason is plain : the Evangelists wrote the history of Christ, and not of these persons ; and therefore they take notice of them as far as Christ was concerned with them, but had no cause to enter into their particular story. To prove the miracle,

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they relate particularly the circumstances of their death, and particularly also the circumstances of their being raised to life : What more would you have ? if you had the minutest account of their affairs afterwards, the miracle would stand as it does, neither diminished nor augmented by the history : and is it reasonable to expect from the Evangelists, that they should write every person's life on whom Christ wrought a cure.

Wherefore, to proceed to the other two objections proper to be spoken to under this head of enquiry ; which, as I said just now, are peculiar to the case of Lazarus. Our author has treated this relation in a very singular manner, and introduces it by a preface, in which he represents it as † “ such a contexture of folly and fraud, as is not to be equalled in all romantic history.” This naturally raises an expectation of some great discoveries ; and what are they ? why, 1. “ Jesus is said to have wept and groaned for the death of Lazarus, whom he had beforehand determined

† P. 38.



to raise from the dead ! 2. Jesus called Lazarus forth with a loud voice ; as if dead Lazarus had been deafer than Jairus's daughter, or the widow's son !” If these, and such as these, be the absurdities and incredibilities he talks of, he may with great ease fill a volume, but with very little advantage to his cause : for where is the absurdity, where is the incredibility, that even Jesus should on this occasion discover in himself the tender, that is the most amiable part of human nature ; or that he should speak loud enough to be heard by all the people that stood by, who were to be witnesses of the power of his word in raising the dead to life ? That which drew tears from the blessed Jesus was not the death of Lazarus, as appears from his own words to his disciples : “ Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes,” Joh. xi. 14, 15. And when Martha met him, and said, “ Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died ;” he answers without any concern, “ thy brother shall rise again.” ver. 21, 23. But when he was going to the grave where his friend was laid, and saw sorrow and distress in the faces of all around



him ; it was then that he first felt those impressions of tenderness, which, without any reproach to us from our reason, are wont to lead us to sympathize with the afflicted : and had this writer been by, to have demanded the reason of his tears, he might have been answered in the words of a Roman poet ; “ *homo sum ; humani nihil à me alienum puto.*”

It would be no groundless conjecture if I should say, that one cause of our Saviour's concern was that slowness of belief which he observed in those, who had afore been often witnesses of his almighty power ; of which this will not be the single instance that is to be found in Scripture. The Jews openly reviled him, and said, “ could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died ?” upon which it presently follows, “ Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave :” and even she who could say with so much assurance, “ I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee ;” seems in that confession to have outrun her real persuasion ; for when Jesus said,



said, "take away the stone," she checks him with a speech full of distrust, "Lord by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." But why should I tire you with such common observations? what if we cannot tell the reason why Jesus wept, nor answer to those who shall ask us, why in the case of Lazarus he "spake with a loud voice?" why in the case of the widow's son he "touched the bier?" why in the case of Jairus's daughter he "took hold of her hand?" is it necessary, in order to support the credit of the history, that we account distinctly for such minute, and perhaps arbitrary circumstances of our Saviour's behaviour? Can even this writer imagine, that the truth of the Gospel depends upon the tone of our Saviour's voice, whether it was soft or loud; upon the motion of his hand, whether it was to the right or to the left? or would such questions as these be borne in any other case? if all histories are to be tried by this rule, they must all be given up as romances; for all are liable to the like objections.

From the account then of these three facts, as they stand recorded by the Evan-



gelists, there is no appearance of any such absurdities as this writer complains of, and which may justly render them suspicious. Another enquiry proper to be made, is, whether in the relation of these facts there are any circumstances wanting, which are necessary to render them full and sufficient proofs of what they were intended to shew, to wit, our Saviour's power in raising the dead to life? and a very material defect there is, if what this writer objects be true; viz. † "that none of these three raised persons had been dead long enough to amputate (as he expresses himself) all doubt of Jesus's miraculous power in their resurrection." His meaning I presume is, that these persons were not dead long enough in appearance to shew that they were really dead: for admitting that they were really dead, it must be granted that Jesus raised them from the dead; because it is not pretended that these persons were not alive after they were supposed to have been dead: the only point therefore to be considered is, what circum-

† P. 26.



stances there are in the story to shew that these persons were really dead ? that they were all of them treated by their friends and relations as dead persons, is evident and incontestable : for when Jesus came to Jairus's house, he found the minstrels there, and the people making great lamentation ; the widow's son was carrying to the grave ; and Lazarus had been actually buried several days : but the question still is, whether in these cases there was not either Mistake or Fraud ? the objector puts in for both pleas as he thinks will best serve his turn ; but every one of common sense must see, that in one and the same case both pleas cannot stand together ; let us therefore take them separately : and first as to the supposed Mistake ; why should any one treat his child or his relation as a dead person, unless he knows him to be so ? Is there any sense in believing, that those about Jairus's daughter would have called in the minstrels, or that the widow would have suffered her only son to be carried forth as a corpse, or Martha, and Mary, their brother to be buried, if there had not been  
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in all these cases all the evidence of death that reason and sense could give? to what purpose then is it to alledge, that these persons were not dead long enough? if they were dead long enough for the conviction of the parents or friends that they were dead, they were dead long enough for the evidence of the miracle; and this the story shews, or it shews nothing. But, because this is a difficulty at every turn to be thrown in our way, I wish we had been told how long it is necessary that a person should be dead, or seemingly dead, before we may reasonably venture to pronounce him dead: the objector himself seems to be under some uncertainty in this matter. In the case of Jairus's daughter, he says, that "she ought to have been some days, if not weeks, dead and buried:" but in the case of the widow's son, he is very positive that he "ought to have been buried two or three weeks." Why buried, I beseech you? is there no knowing that a person is dead till he has lain some time in the earth? are not the proper evidences of death always supposed as antecedent to burial? and will not a few hours (or days  
at



at most) determine this evidence to all reasonable satisfaction? why no, says the objector; for † “ history and common fame affords instances of the mistaken deaths of persons, who sometimes have been unfortunately buried alive; and at other times happily restored to life.” Allowing him as many instances of this kind as he can have the conscience to ask, still it must be admitted, that there is a common evidence in this case which all the world understands, and acts upon without scruple. Let him answer then to this plain question; would he (such rare instances notwithstanding) venture to bury his friend or his child upon the common evidences of death, or would he not? if he says he would not, somebody I doubt not would have sense enough to do it for him: but if he says he would, let him tell me why that which is a sufficient proof that a man is dead when he is only to be put into the ground, is not as good a proof when his death is to be made use of as the foundation to support a miracle in his resurrection? I

† P. 28.



can see no reason that can be assigned for any difference in these cases, unless it be said, that we ought to be less afraid of burying men alive, than of believing the Gospel.

I do not observe, that this writer has any where suggested a possibility of mistake in the case of Lazarus. The reason is plain : for he, according to the history, having been four days in the grave, if there had been any mistake at first, yet by that time he was certainly dead : but as to the widow's son, he, we are told, might have been in a lethargy ; and Jairus's daughter asleep or in a fit ; all which is a direct contradiction to the principal circumstances of each story, as I have shewn. Their friends treated them as dead persons, which supposes that they had the common evidence of being dead ; and this evidence as fully justified them in admitting the miracles, as it would have justified them in putting the bodies into the grave : but to pleasure the gentleman, we will admit his plea for once, and see in what light the cases will stand. The young man, he says, was in a lethargick state : be it so ; but in all appearance



ance he was so like a dead man, that all about him concluded him to be dead, and accordingly carried him out in order to burial. How then could Jesus (supposing him to have been an impostor) know, or so much as suspect that he was not dead, but in a lethargy? why, says the objector, (and it is all he had to say) “somebody might inform him:” but how so? the very carrying this man to his grave, shews that there was no suspicion of any such case, and consequently there could be no such information; much less could any one tell, or Jesus know, the exact time when the man was to awake out of his lethargy. What then are we to believe in this case? why, that Jesus needlessly offered himself to a publick trial, without the least reasonable prospect of success: the company met him accidentally upon the road; but nobody asked him, or challenged him to raise this man to life; it was his own offer. Jesus therefore either supposed the man to be dead, or he did not; if he supposed him to be dead (as he had great reason) he must needs know (upon the foot we are now arguing) that it was not in his



his power to raise him : if he did not suppose him dead, but hoped that there might be some such mistake as this writer talks of, the hazard that he might be disappointed, in presuming upon a case which scarce happens once in a century, added to the farther hazard, that if this should be the case, the man might not possibly awake upon his touching the bier, and calling upon him to arise, made the chance against him to out-run all reckoning : there is therefore no sense in supposing, either that Jesus should have attempted any such thing, or if he had attempted it, that he should have succeeded. It was at least above ten millions to one that he was defeated.

The case of Jairus's daughter will have exactly the same appearance. Here Jesus was requested by a person of note, to go and heal his daughter then at the point of death. Before he could get to the house, a messenger meets him and acquaints the father, that she was actually dead. Jesus was so far from excusing himself upon this change in the case (as he very easily might) that he offers of his own accord to go forward, and tells the father, that he would  
raise



raise her to life : “ be not afraid, only believe, and she shall be made whole,” Luk. viii. 50. It is obvious to remark, that whatever might be the case of this child in reality, Jesus had all the reason in the world to believe her to be dead ; for the servant came on purpose to make this report : here is therefore (supposing him an impostor) the same rashness and presumption as in the other case ; but his behaviour afterwards (if this writer’s account of it be true) shews him to have been quite void of sense : for when he comes to the house, what does he find ? why the whole family in an uproar, and possessed in the strongest manner imaginable, that she was dead : yet, says the objector, she “ was not dead, but asleep,” and Jesus himself knew it, and made publick declaration of it before the whole company, “ the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.” Surely such a heap of absurdities was never till now packed up together in one short tale ! here is an impostor making a bold and a desperate push, which must either ruin him at once, or establish his reputation for ever : he undertakes to raise a person to life whom he was assured



assured was dead: if she was dead in good earnest, he was undone; all his hopes rested upon a bare possibility that there might be some mistake in the case. Upon these hopes he goes; and when he comes there, luckily finds that there was a mistake, and more luckily still, that he himself was the only one who perceived it. What now does he do? why, instead of improving this extraordinary accident to his own advantage, he takes away (as much as in him lies) all possible pretence for a miracle, by declaring plainly, that the person was not really dead as they supposed, but asleep, and wanted only to be awakened! If the gentleman can in earnest believe that Jesus was capable of such management as this, he must needs acquit him of having any hand in the plot, which he has been pleased to cut out for him.

But to come to the truth of the case. Jesus by this expression certainly meant nothing less than to declare against the opinion and knowledge of all the company, that this child was not naturally dead. We have the same way of speaking in the case of Lazarus: "this sickness, says he,  
is



is not unto death :” and again ; “ our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep :” and yet, as appears from what follows, Jesus was sensible when he said this, that Lazarus was dead : a reasonable man will as little doubt whether he believed that this child was dead, or not : but the objector’s argument will not permit him to say that Jesus believed her to be dead : was he then persuaded that she was not dead ? impossible : for as St. Mark tells the story, he had not so much as seen the child when he said these words ; and whether he had, or had not, it is certain from all the Evangelists, that notwithstanding this declaration of Jesus, the company still believed her to be dead, and (mistaking the meaning of the expression) were offended at him ; which shews that the evidences of death upon her were very plain and strong : so that here again, as in the foregoing case, Jesus must be supposed to have run the hazard of a publick defeat, not only without, but against all probability of saving himself, and yet with the same good fortune as before : for no sooner did he pronounce



nounce these words, “damsel arise,” than she arose and walked! How credible this may appear to some understandings, I cannot tell; but to me it seems impossible, (excluding all supposition of fraud) to give any tolerable account of the facts as they here stand related, without supposing in Jesus a consciousness of a divine power; which might be observed likewise of many other of our Saviour’s miracles, if it were proper to take notice of them in this place. If this writer will persist in the contrary, and say, that all this was mere chance, it will only shew the great partiality of an unbelieving spirit; which in considering the evidences for religion, takes offence at every thing, but in admitting objections against it, finds nothing too hard for its digestion.

I come now to the suggestion of Fraud; which in the objector’s own opinion seems to have no place in the case of Jairus’s daughter, because in remarking upon this story, he has not thought fit to offer any such suggestion; but as to that of the widow’s son, he says, that there might be



a trick † “ concerted between Jesus, a subtil youth, and his mother, and others ; and all the formalities of a death and burial contrived, that Jesus, whose fame for a worker of miracles was to be raised, might have an opportunity to make a shew of a grand one.” The same account he gives also of the case of Lazarus, who, says he, † “ might consent to be interred alive in a hollow cave, where there was only a stone laid at the mouth of it, as long as a man could fast, &c.” It will be allowed, I suppose, that these and all such like suggestions, so far as they are mere suggestions, unsupported by any evidence, are of no weight ; because otherwise there must be an end of all historical truth. The objector indeed pretends, that || “ it is nonsense and mere credulity to talk of a real, certain, and stupendous miracle where there is a possibility of fraud ;” which is quite absurd : for in all questions concerning facts, it is supposed, that the matter or thing under consideration might have been, or might not have been ; and the deter-

† P. 28.

† P. 29.

|| P. 28.

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mining the fact this way, or that way, is the proper use and design of evidence. If a man be accused of robbing upon the highway, it is supposed possible that he may have robbed, and also possible that he may not have robbed : which of these two possibilities is the real fact; is the point in judgment; and this must be determined by the weight of the evidence on either side. This writer says, that possibly there may have been fraud in these cases : very well. We have, I hope, as good a right to say, that possibly there may have been no fraud ; and if we can bring proper evidence to shew that there was no fraud, and he has none to offer against it, to shew that there was fraud, I suppose it will bear no question which way common sense must determine.

It must be considered then what this writer has offered against the Scripture-History, to shew that there was fraud in these cases. Now as to the case of the widow's son, all that I can find to the purpose, is this, that "the mourning of the widow—and Jesus's casual meeting of the corpse upon the road, looks like contrivance  
to



to put the better face upon the matter ;” in which observation there might have been some sense, if the suspicion of fraud had first been well supported : but to found a suggestion of fraud merely upon these circumstances, is absolutely ridiculous, and shews him to be perfectly careless in what he says. There is no question to be made, but that sorrow may be counterfeited, and that a design may sometimes lie concealed under the appearance of chance and casualty : but did ever any one say, that a woman’s weeping for the loss of her son proves her to be a hypocrite ? or that two persons meeting, as it were by accident upon the road, is an evidence of a plot ? fraud there may be, I say, under such circumstances ; but then the fraud must be made appear not by such circumstances, but by something else. The most obvious and natural construction from these circumstances, is, that there was no fraud, as he himself confesses ; for why else does he say, that they were contrived “ to put the better face upon the matter ?” The truth is, that all counterfeits endeavour to imitate nature, and to hide their cheat under



the proper characters of truth : but is it reasonable therefore to suspect fraud in a case, merely because you observe the common characters of truth in it ? every coiner puts the king's face and inscription upon his false money ; will you therefore think it reason enough to suspect every shilling, because it has the king's face and inscription ? no ; all that can be said is, that the king's face and inscription are no certain proof that there is no fraud, where there is reason to suspect one ; but to say that of themselves they naturally import a fraud, is highly absurd. Let the gentleman then produce the proper evidence of a fraud, and his plea shall be admitted ; otherwise we shall have a right to consider these circumstances according to what they naturally import, and to argue from hence, that no measures were concerted between Jesus, the young man, and his mother, or any others. If Jesus's meeting this corpse upon the road was really casual, it is plain, that no measures could have been concerted. Now thus it is that the history represents it : upon the face of the history there-



therefore all is right, and no appearance of any fraud, but quite the contrary.

But for the case of Lazarus, what shall we do? † “The most notorious cheat, says the objector, that was ever put upon mankind!” and || “for the proof of it, he says, we need go no farther than to the circumstances of its story, which our Evangelist has related.” I will not ask here what interest Jesus or any one else could have in contriving such a cheat; this is a point to be spoken to hereafter: at present I confine myself to the circumstances of the story, as St. John has recorded it, which in my apprehension are so far from having any appearance of fraud, that they carry with them the strongest presumptions of honesty and plain-dealing, that circumstances can give. When Lazarus fell sick Jesus was not with him, nor did he see any of the family till he had been buried some days: and when Martha and Mary met him, their behaviour was such as might naturally be expected from those, who were under the most sensible concern

† P. 31.      || P. 43.

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for the loss of so near a friend. The gentleman, no question, will say again, that this was all grimace, the better to disguise a design concerted between them some time before, and now to be put in execution ; let him say so if he pleases ; he will not pretend, I hope, that these circumstances have any tendency to shew that there was any such design ; and therefore (as I said just now) till the fraud appears, we have reason to consider them as presumptions at least on our side. What gives some weight to these circumstances is, that the disciples of Jesus, as their behaviour shews, were perfectly ignorant of any design concerted between their master, and the family of Lazarus : for when Jesus first opened to them his intention to go and visit Lazarus, they opposed it, fearing the Jews : (ver. 8.) when he told them that he was asleep, they (mistaking his meaning) conceived hopes of his recovery : (ver. 12.) and when he told them plainly that he was dead, they shewed great concern, and cried out ; “let us go, that we may die with him.” (ver. 16.) Is this like men who were privy to a design of imposing  
upon



upon the world by a counterfeit resurrection, just then ripe for execution ? The objector, I conceive, will have little room to say here, that this was art and contrivance : for what need was there of disguise in a private discourse between Jesus and his own disciples ? how credible it is now, that Jesus should have concealed a design of this sort (had there been any such) from his disciples, who (as this writer is pleased to represent the matter) had so large a share in the grand cheat of all, his own resurrection, which was very soon to follow, I leave to any reasonable person to consider.

But the great points are yet behind, which are these, that the man had been laid in his grave four days, and that the miracle of his resurrection was wrought in the presence of a multitude of people, enemies as well as friends ; circumstances which cut off all pretence of fraud, as well as of mistake. You have before heard, that in this writer's opinion, Lazarus might, for the propagation of his master's fame, consent to be interred alive in a hollow cave for two days and three nights : but how to provide for him so long, so as to



prevent a real tragedy, he seems (as well he might) to have been pretty much at a loss. Sometimes he thinks he might well enough fast all that while ; at other times he is contriving how to get him some food. Surely a very needless care ! since it is against all the knowledge that we have to suppose it possible, that any person disposed of as Lazarus was, should not very quickly be put beyond all capacity of eating and drinking : stripped naked, swathed up in grave-cloaths, put into a vault underground, with a stone laid upon it, intercepting communication with the external air, and yet alive and well on the fourth day ! Is this possible ? we have no instance of any thing like it : and fond as this writer seems to be of his cause, I am persuaded that he would not for all it is worth, be prevailed upon to submit to have the experiment made upon himself : if he will, it is soon done ; and I may venture to assure him, that one successful attempt of this kind would go farther towards destroying the credit of this miracle, than all the objections he can raise from the circumstances of the story. But if he thinks  
that



that this is hazarding a great deal too much, why should he not believe that Lazarus would have thought so too ?

But let us suppose this difficulty got over, and that Lazarus was all this while alive ; still there is another point as hard to account for, and that is how the people should be made to believe that he was dead, when the grave came to be opened, and the body exposed to publick view. To shew that craft was used by Lazarus to impose upon the multitude, the objector lays hold of a very trivial circumstance, viz. “ that his face was bound about with a napkin, by which means (says he) the spectators could not discern what was of the essence of the miracle, the change of his countenance from a dead to a live one.” It is marvellous to see how this writer can shift and change his notions to serve his zeal against the Gospel-History. Now, it seems, the spectators might have known Lazarus to be dead, had they but seen his face : and yet just now, in the cases before-mentioned, he supposes that the friends and relations of the dead, who yet certainly saw their faces, were mistaken, and were carrying



rying their friends alive to be buried: but let this pass; he asks, “why was not the napkin taken away, that the people might see him to be dead?” the answer is ready, because no one did or possibly could think there wanted evidence of his death: there was not, even among the Jews, one man of this writer’s spirit; not one who thought there wanted proof of a man’s being dead, when he had been four days buried; not one who thought Christ only a pretended worker of miracles: no; long experience had convinced them, how unwilling soever they were to own him for their Messiah, that he was “mighty in word and deed.”

After all, I am not certain that the gentleman is right in his observation. The text says, “that Lazarus’s face was bound about with a napkin;” but it does not say that it was covered with a napkin, so that the spectators might not discern his countenance. At chap. xx. ver. 7. we read “Συδάριον ὃ ἐν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, the napkin that was Upon the head of Jesus;” by which it should seem that the *Sudarium* was a part of the burial-dress that was bound about the head, covering only the  
upper



upper part of the face or forehead like a night-cap : and if so, this circumstance can be no proof that his face was not open to the view of the company, and that the tokens of death were not plain and visible. However this was, the gentleman tells us plainly, that the spectators (many of them at least) did by some means or other find out that Lazarus was alive, when Jesus pretended to raise him from the dead : for the cheat, he says, was detected, and this was the reason why he was prosecuted, condemned, and put to death by the Jews. This observation is to the purpose, if it can be made good ; let us see how he supports it.

He observes then from the Evangelist, \* that “ many of the Jews who had seen the things that Jesus did, believed on him, (ver. 45.) that some of them who did not believe, went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done (ver. 46.) in this pretended miracle, and how the business was transacted : whereupon the chief priests and pharisees were

\* P. 41. & seq.



so incensed, as from that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death, (ver. 53.) and consulted that they might put also Lazarus to death, (chap. xii. ver. 10.) Jesus therefore (and his disciples, and Lazarus, fled for it, for they) walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence into a country near to the wilderness (a convenient hiding-place) and there continued with his disciples, (chap. xi. ver. 54.) otherwise in all probability they had been all sacrificed." Upon this general state of the case he asks two questions, viz. 1. † "If there had been an indisputable miracle wrought in Lazarus's resurrection, why were the chief priests and pharisees so incensed upon it, as to take counsel to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death for it?" 2. || Why did Jesus and his disciples, with Lazarus, run away and abscond from it?" To these two questions he thinks no reasonable answer can be given; and thence concludes as above, that Jesus was detected in a fraud, for which he was publickly tried and condemned. I am under some

† P. 43. || P. 44.

hopes



hopes that the answer will not be found so difficult as the gentleman is willing to suppose ; and that these circumstances fairly considered as they stand in the Gospel, will be so far from shewing that Jesus was detected in a fraud, that they will shew the contrary. The way to set this matter in a true light, will be to collect together the chief passages of the Scripture-History subsequent to this transaction, in order as they stand ; from whence I conceive, that the true motives both of our Saviour's conduct, and of the behaviour of the Jews in reference both to him and Lazarus, will be made plain to any common understanding.

In the first place then, it will be proper to take notice what present effect this action had upon those who saw it : and as to this we are told, that many believed on Jesus, but some went their ways to the pharisees, &c. By this it is plain, that the greater part of the spectators not only confessed the miracle, but were hereupon convinced that Jesus was the Christ : for many believed, and some (that is a few in comparison to those that believed) went their ways, &c. probably not above two  
or



or three. But few as they were, they were it seems wiser than all the rest, who (says our writer) † “were ignorant, credulous, and easily imposed on.” Who doubts it? they were believers; which is enough it seems to prove them fools. But, setting this reason aside, the gentleman has no more authority to pronounce them credulous, and easy to be imposed upon, than he has to say the same thing of the inhabitants of the moon, with whom he is just as well acquainted as he is with these; only with this difference, that whatever degree of prejudice the Jews had, he well understands it lay not in favour of Jesus as the Christ, but against him. But to leave him in possession of his wise men: when they come to the chief priests and pharisees, what do they tell them? that they had detected Jesus in an imposture? quite otherwise, as appears from what the chief priests and pharisees said themselves, when, in consequence of this information, they were assembled in council. “*What do we? for this man doth many miracles: if we*

† P. 49.



*let him thus alone, all men will believe on him."* Would the council have reasoned in this manner if the purport of the information had been, that Jesus had wrought no miracle, but had been acting a cheat, which they had discovered, and were ready to prove against him? impossible: the information therefore must have been that Jesus had wrought a most surprizing miracle; and to this the very passage, upon which this writer relies, perfectly agrees. *Many* (says the Evangelist) *believed on Jesus, but some went their ways to the pharisees.* The antithesis here, supposes indeed, that those some that went their ways to the pharisees believed not: but what was it that they did not believe? why that Jesus was the Christ: the miracle they saw, and could not deny; the consequence of the miracle they did not see, or would not acknowledge. There is no difficulty in conceiving this to be the case; examples of it in Scripture are frequent.

What therefore the objector lays down as † plain from the story in John, viz.

† P. 51.

“That



“ That there was a dispute among the bystanders at Lazarus’s resurrection, whether it was a real miracle or not,” directly contradicts St. John : for even those who believed not, confessed the miracle ; and it is scarce credible that they should have differed with the rest upon this point : for had they discovered the cheat, as is pretended, it is wonderful that they should leave any one of the company to believe in Christ, when it was in their power upon the very spot to detect the fraud that was committed. To what purpose was it for them to withdraw sullenly, and go with a story to the chief priests, when they might with much better effect have opened their discovery to the rest of the people, and taken every man there to be a witness to the forgery ?

To go on now with the history : upon this information that the chief priests and pharisees had received concerning Jesus, they presently determine to put him and Lazarus to death. Here the objector demands a reason, and asks, † “ where was the provocation ?” I hope the gentle-

† P. 43.



man does not expect that I should give him a good reason, that is, such a reason as will justify the Jews in their conduct towards Jesus : but the true reason (if I need tell it him) is this, viz. that the owning Jesus to be the Messiah, was giving up at once all those great expectations which they had founded upon the Scripture-prophecies ; and that prejudice had the same effect here which it is observed to have in many other cases, to wit, the hardening men against the truth, and enraging them against those who abet and maintain it. This was the reason of their hatred both to Jesus and Lazarus, who if they could once be put out of the way, it was hoped, I suppose, that in a little time the miracle would no more be heard of. The gentleman pretends, that ‡ “it is unnatural to hate a miraculous healer of diseases, and much more so, to hate a man for having had a good and wonderful work done on him :” very true ; if this were all : but it is weak to suggest, that either Jesus was hated for doing a good work, or Lazarus for receiv-

‡ P. 45. 44.



ing the benefit of it: “for a good work (say the Jews in a like case) we stone thee not, but because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Joh. x. 33. And concerning Lazarus, it is particularly said (what indeed is natural enough to be supposed) “that the reason why the chief priests consulted to put him to death was because they found that through him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus,” chap. xii. ver. 11. The miracles of Jesus, as such, did not move their indignation; but considered as brought in evidence to give credit to a doctrine, to which they had an irreconcilable aversion. If Jesus had taught no doctrine at all, or no doctrine contrary to the opinions commonly received, his healing the sick, and raising the dead to life, would questionless have every where gained him very great esteem, and they would very readily have admitted, that the power by which he was enabled to do such miracles, was indeed divine: but when the case was so that they could not acknowledge the hand of God in these things without giving up their religion, though it is certain, that this was no reason why they



they ought not to have so done, yet it is enough to believe, that it might have the effect which we find it had in blinding their eyes against conviction, and in putting them upon contriving the destruction both of Jesus himself, and of every one else who was instrumental in supporting his authority among the people.

The objector is so well apprized of the greatness of this miracle, that, supposing it to have been really done, he thinks it was \* “enough to have stopped the mouths and turned the hearts of the Jews in spite of all their prejudices against Jesus :” and he is very positive, that † “if such a miracle were wrought at this day in confirmation of Christianity, it would bring himself and every body else to a man, into the belief of it.” I am very much afraid the gentleman knows not what he says. It is the nature of this kind of spirit, to be ever quarrelling with the evidence we have, and to be crying out for something to supply its defects, which the wisdom of God has not thought fit to give us : that the Jews ought to have believed upon this evidence, I agree with him ; but if he means to urge

\* P. 43. † P. 46.



their unbelief as a proof that such a miracle was never wrought (which is the plain drift of his argument) he reasons very absurdly : and I think it must be allowed, that he goes beyond all bounds of discretion when he says, that \* “ it was not possible for any people to be so bigotted, byassed, and prejudiced, as not to be wrought upon by it.” He himself confesses, that § “ mankind may be in some cases very obdurate, and so hard of belief, as to stand out against sense, reason, and demonstration.” Let him shew then if he can, why the Jews might not possibly do so in the case before us : what is this, or any other miracle, more than a demonstration to sense and reason of the power of God ? if then demonstration as demonstration may be resisted, why not a miracle, which is but demonstration ? He observes, that || “ such a miracle—would strike men with awe and reverence ; and none could hate and persecute the author of it, lest he who could raise the dead, should exert his power against themselves, and either wound or

\* P. 46.

§ P. 48.

|| Ibid.



smite them dead with it :” all which is very right, supposing men to be first convinced that God is the author of the miracle ; but the point between us will still be, whether the prejudices of many might not hinder them from discerning the hand of God in these things ; I say they might, and deny it he cannot, in consequence of his general principle, that “ men may stand out against demonstration,” unless he can shew some reason why this case should be admitted as an exception : but what should this reason be ? demonstration is demonstration, let it be built upon what it will ; and there is not greater difficulty in resisting the will of God when made known by the evidence of a miracle, than when made known by any other evidence equally convincing. How far violent prepossessions are capable of imposing upon the understandings of men, in judging concerning plain and evident things, nothing but experience can determine ; and we see a variety of instances of this kind every day, which if we did not see, we should hardly believe. I suppose, that we have not stronger evidence from the miracle of Lazarus’s resurrection,

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furrection, (admitting it to have been wrought) that Jesus was the Christ, than we have from the principles of common sense, that transubstantiation is false; yet there are millions that believe this doctrine, and are ready to cut the throats of all that deny it. It is absurd therefore to argue against any thing that is credibly related as fact, from a mere presumption what mankind is, or is not capable of doing: for at this rate a hundred things may be proved false, which all the world knows to be true; and I make no question, but that upon this foot, the gentleman might make as plausible an apology for his Popish, as his learned friend the Rabbi has made for his Jewish ancestors, and prove that there never was or could be any such thing as a persecution of harmless innocent Protestants.

Thus much may suffice to have been spoken, in answer to the objection against the credibility of this miracle, drawn from the Jews treatment of our Saviour. The following part of the story will lead us to say something concerning our Saviour's conduct, in consequence of this treatment: for we are  
told,



told, that upon the consultation of the chief priests and pharisees, “Jesus walked no more openly among the Jews, but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples,” Joh. xi. 54. The objector, who is willing to represent our Saviour upon this occasion as a mere runaway, tells us of his withdrawing into a country near the wilderness, as a convenient hiding-place; but wilfully omits to take notice, that he took up his abode at Ephraim; the reason of which I presume might be, that if he had mentioned this circumstance, it might have appeared too plain to his readers, that though he thought it prudent for the present to shelter himself from the storm that was gathering, by retiring into a more private place than Jerusalem, or the parts adjacent; yet he was not afraid to shew his head. But before I come directly to his objections, give me leave to ask this one short question; if Jesus was a common cheat, and had been publickly detected as such, upon so remarkable an occasion as this, how was it that he was permitted to retire towards



the wilderness ? why was he not immediately seized upon the place as soon as the fraud was discovered, together with Lazarus, and all that were concerned as accomplices with him ? The gentleman himself observes, that if they had not fled, † “in all probability they had been sacrificed :” very well ; but why, I ask, were they suffered to flee ? were there not hands enough to hold them ? || “If a false prophet at this time a day should counterfeit such a miracle, and be detected in the operation ---what then ? why (says he) the rage of the populace would hardly wait the leisure of justice to dispatch and make terrible examples of them.” Right again ; but did any thing like this happen to Jesus ? quite the contrary : instead of being made a sacrifice to popular rage, both he and his disciples are suffered to go away quietly, without so much as any attempt to secure and bring them to publick justice ! This shews plainly, that the enemies of Jesus instead of discovering any fraud, were perfectly confounded, and knew not what to

† P. 42.

|| P. 47, 48.



do, till upon consultation had with the chief priests and pharisees, some measures were resolved upon : But to let this pass ; Jesus knowing that resolutions were taken to put him to death retires (as was said before) with his disciples. “ Is not here, says our writer, a plain sign of guilt and fraud†?” I hope not ! They had indeed God’s cause and truth on their side : but does an honest cause preclude men from the common methods of prudence to secure themselves from suffering unjustly ? in common cases, I presume, it will be said, no : but the gentleman farther observes, that they had the power of God on their sides too ; even || “ that power that raised Lazarus from the dead, which was able to have protected them against their enemies.” No doubt it was able : but what if in the wisdom of God it did not seem meet to make use of that power for their deliverance ?

There was a time appointed in the foreknowledge of God, when Jesus was to be offered upon the cross for the sins of the

† P. 44.

|| P. 16.

world ;



world ; this time was not yet fully accomplished, though it was indeed nigh at hand : but till it should be accomplished he was to be preserved ; how ? plainly not by a miraculous interposition, but by the ordinary methods of Providence : for had he summoned his legions from heaven, and overthrown his enemies by a visible exercise of his sovereign power, “ how then (as he himself observes) should the Scriptures have been fulfilled that thus it must be ? ” Mat. xxvi. 54. who after such a defeat as this would have dared again to have laid hands on him ? The gentleman perhaps will not like this account of Jesus’s flight ; I cannot help it : if he will not allow it to be true, he cannot deny it to be consistent ; and till he is in a fit temper to receive it, let him run over the remaining part of our Saviour’s life, and see if his behaviour was such as can with any tolerable appearance of good sense be supposed of a man who had been detected as an impostor, and was fled from the hand of justice. It was not long that he continued at Ephraim ; and what is very remarkable, the next news we hear of him was



was at Bethany, in the house of Lazarus, where he was entertained at supper, publicly, in the presence of great numbers of the Jews, who came, not only for Jesus sake, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. Joh. xii. 1---10. Bethany was a village about two miles distant from Jerusalem (Joh. xi. 18.) where, within six days, the passover was to be celebrated: (Joh. xii. 1.) here our Saviour, whose design was to be at the feast, took up his quarters, and during this short interval went daily to Jerusalem, where he appeared in the most publick and frequented places. The first time of his going thither he was met upon the way by great throngs of people, who with loud acclamations, and other publick marks of honour, ushered him into the city: (ver. 12.) after this we find him in the temple, driving out the buyers and the sellers, (Mat. xxi. 12.) disputing with the scribes and pharisees; rebuking them sharply with biting parables; and exposing them openly in his discourses to the people, as blind, wicked, and hypocritical. (ver. 23. to the end, and chap. xxii. xxiii. throughout.)



out.) Let me stop here then, and ask a few questions : what was it that brought Jesus from Ephraim, whither he had retired for security ? was he pursued ? was he driven from thence ? no ; it was his own choice : but would he have come away so quickly ? would he have come again to Bethany, the very place where the fraud had so lately been discovered, and to the house of the very man who was the principal actor with him in the cheat ? would he have gone to Jerusalem, into the very teeth of his enemies ? or would they, from whom he but a little while before made his escape for fear of being sacrificed, have received him immediately with such marks of distinction ? there is no degree of credibility in these suppositions ; nor is any tolerable account to be given of the facts as related on either side, without admitting in our Saviour a consciousness of his own innocency of any just imputation of fraud, and on the part of the people a general persuasion that he wrought these miracles by the power of God. The freedom of speech which our Saviour used, in reproving the great and leading men among them,



them, had been downright madness in him : but it is worth our notice, that in all the disputes that Jesus had at this time with the chief priests and others, who used all the artifice possible to entangle him in his talk, and to catch something from him, which might furnish them with just matter of accusation, there is not the least hint or intimation of any fraud committed, or suspected to have been committed in the case of Lazarus ; now considering the great weight of the objection (supposing it to have been true) the short time that had passed since the thing was done, and that several were there present, who must have been witnesses of the fraud, it is to me incredible, that somebody or other should not have taken notice of the fraud, if there had been one suspected, to disgrace him with the people. But contrary to this St. John expressly says (chap. xii. ver. 17.) that the people that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record to Jesus ; intimating withal, that the fame of this miracle occasioned a greater concourse than ordinary at Jerusalem at that time : for thus it follows :  
(ver.



(ver. 18.) for this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. A clear demonstration that there was no detection of fraud in the case of Lazarus, but that the fact was as the Evangelist has represented it.

I might further add, that at Jesus's trial before Pontius Pilate, there is not a word about any fraud in the case of Lazarus; that Lazarus himself was never called to account for his part in the cheat; and that the supposition of a cheat detected in the case of Lazarus, makes the caution of the Jews, to prevent the like fraud in Jesus's own resurrection, absurd and unaccountable; but these things have ‡ already been set in a proper light. And therefore to conclude this point; you have seen how these cases stand upon the face of the Scripture-History, and it appears, 1. that taking them as they are recorded by the Evangelists, they are clear of all such absurdities and inconsistencies as may justly render them suspicious. 2. That in the relation of these facts, there are no circumstances

‡ Trial of the witnesses, P. 38, 39.

wanting,



wanting, which are necessary to make them full and sufficient proofs of what they were intended to shew, to wit, our Saviour's power in raising the dead to life ; under which head I have cleared them likewise from all imputation of mistake or fraud : but it will be said, it is likely, that circumstances may be invented as well as facts ; and that the Apostles, if they had any design of imposing upon the world, by a relation of counterfeit miracles, might have discretion enough, by suppressing some particulars which were true, and reporting others which were not true, to give the whole an air of credibility. It may now therefore be proper to consider,

Secondly, what is the evidence upon which we believe these facts to have been justly and faithfully represented, and what exceptions this writer has produced to weigh against that evidence.

That the books of the New Testament are the genuine writings of the persons whose names they bear, the gentleman denies not : that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, and that these writers had that relation to him, as disciples and followers,



lowers, which they pretend to have had, he all along admits, and takes for granted: whether therefore the Evangelists were qualified or not qualified to give us a true account of what Jesus did, if they were minded so to do, can be no part of the question between us; for they speak of such things, as, if they were done at all, were done in their own times, whereof themselves (as the constant attendants of Jesus, during the time of his ministry) must have been eye-witnesses, or have received immediately from those who were so. The only point then in dispute must be, whether the Evangelists are persons to be depended upon or not; and concerning this it is sufficient to say, that they have given the strongest evidence of their integrity that it is in the power of man to give: I mean in their maintaining these truths, under the most absolute renunciation and defiance of the world, and, at last, sealing them with the testimony of their blood. The objector laments it as † “a sad misfortune that attends our inquiry after truth in these

† P. 50.



matters, that there are no other memorials extant of the life and miracles of Jesus than what are written by his own disciples :” as if the Evangelists were therefore not to be credited because they were the disciples of Christ : but this must needs be a weak pretence, because it is not reasonable to expect that the enemies of Jesus should have left any memorials of him as a worker of miracles. The Jews, you see, took all the pains they could that they might be no more heard of ; and it is natural enough to believe, that all the world besides, who would not be convinced by his miracles, should do the like as well as they : so that if a history of the life and miracles of Jesus is not to be expected from his enemies, nor admitted from his friends, the consequence must be, that though Jesus did work these miracles, and give the proper evidences of his working them, to those who were themselves witnesses of what he did, yet there was no such thing as recording or reporting these miracles, in such a sort as to make it reasonable for any body else to believe them ; which, I think, is by much too great an



absurdity to stand with common sense. But why are the disciples of Jesus not to be credited, in reporting the actions of their own master? supposing them to be men of integrity, the circumstance of their being disciples, is so far from making their evidence the worse, that it makes it the better: for who were so likely to know what Jesus did, as they who constantly attended him during his ministry? Now this I say, that if the apostles have not given full and sufficient proof of their integrity, there is no possibility that any man upon earth should give sufficient proof of his integrity; because in the reason and nature of things, there can be no stronger evidence of a man's integrity, than his laying down his life in confirmation of what he says. The apostles were Jesus's friends: you say right; but what did they get by being his friends? houses, or lands, or friends, or any thing else that could make it worth their while to tell lies for him? if this had been the case the objection would have some sense in it: but since they were told aforehand, by their master himself, and afterwards found it true by their own  
ex-



experience, that the consequence of their being his friends would be their being at enmity with all the world besides, and that it was impossible that they should appear as maintainers of his doctrines, or as witnesses of his works, without giving up the life that now is for the sake of another to come, it is evident beyond exception, that supposing them to have had the common passions and sentiments of men, and not to have been quite beside themselves, their steadiness in asserting these things to the last, can be resolved into nothing else, than the power and conviction of truth upon their minds. You might say (if you could shew any good reason for saying so) that the apostles were fools or madmen, for believing that Jesus Christ wrought these miracles : but to pretend, that notwithstanding they have asserted, that Jesus wrought these miracles, yet that they themselves did not believe that he wrought them, after such evidence of their being superior to every consideration that might tempt them to falsity, is absurd, and contradicts all the notions and experience we have of mankind.



The gentleman, in answer to this common and general argument, somewhere observes coldly, that † “many cheats and criminals have asserted their innocency in the utmost extremity of death ;” which, how little it is to the purpose, has already been shewn in a † treatise before mentioned, to which I refer the reader. Thus much I think is the least that any man of sense and reason can say, that if the Evangelists have not given absolute and incontestable proof of their integrity, they have given very great proof of it ; and that this proof, whatever it is, ought to be admitted as sufficient, till some considerations of greater, or at least equal, weight be offered to ballance on the other side. What then has this writer to say against this evidence ? hitherto we have heard of nothing but surmises, mere surmises, such as would not in any ordinary case be allowed to bear down the credit of any common evidence. But there are two objections which seem in a more direct manner to affect the credit of the Evangelists as historians, which

† Sixth discourse, P. 27.      † Trial of the witnesses,  
P. 103.



I shall briefly reply to, and then thank my reader for the patience he has allowed me.

His first observation is a mere presumption, which therefore I should not have taken notice of, but that the gentleman is pleased to say, that † “in the opinion of the impartial it makes for his cause.” It is this; “that not only time has devoured, but Christians themselves, when they got the power into their hands, wilfully destroyed many writings of the Jews, as well as of Celsus and Porphyry, and others which they could not answer; otherwise he doubts not but they would have given us clear light into the imposture of Lazarus’s resurrection:” that many books antiently written against Christianity, by Jews and others, are now lost, there can be no question; but did the gentleman ever see any of these books? no, they have been lost long ago: how then does he know that these books were unanswerable; or why is he so positive that they “would have given us a clear light into the im-

† Fifth discourse, P. 50.



posture of Lazarus's resurrection," or of any other miracle of Jesus, but because, as I have observed before, he finds it an easy matter to believe every vain surmise, that starts up in his head to the prejudice of Christianity, and is determined to admit of nothing, how reasonably soever it is offered, that speaks in its favour. If he will take the character of Porphyry (whose books Theodosius the emperor ordered to be burnt) \* from Eusebius who had seen and read them, he will find in it a very unhappy description of some writers of these times; for he says, he was one "who for lack of reasons to support his cause, set himself to railing, and that he would sometimes speak truth, when he could not help it; but never scrupled to tell a lie, when he thought he could palm it upon his readers, without being discovered." † I do not expect that the authority of Eusebius should pass with this writer; nor that he will allow the reasonings of Celsus to have been fairly represented by Origen. These were Christians, and therefore not to be believed in their own cause: but if Celsus

† Eccles. Hist. B. 6. C. 19.



and Porphyry were really such strenuous, unanswerable advocates of heathenism, how came their friends to suffer their books to be lost? Time was, when the heathens had power enough, and the Christians were harrassed and hunted for in every corner; their books demanded to be delivered up, and as often as delivered, destroyed; yet in spite of all this, the writings of the New Testament (which were all of them extant above two hundred years before the empire became Christian) stood their ground, and by the good providence of God remain unto this day: but no sooner (says our writer) is the same power in the hands of Christians, but away fly the books of infidels as in a whirlwind. How so? one may reasonably ask; were not the heathens, when under the power of the Christians, as able to preserve their books from being destroyed, as the Christians, when under the power of the heathens, were to preserve theirs? no doubt but they were, if mere power were the only thing to be considered. But there was this remarkable difference in the case, which is the only thing

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that can give an adequate account of the different fate of these writings, the books of the New Testament were so confirmed and established by undoubted evidence, and Christians were so fully convinced of their divine authority, that they willingly sacrificed their lives, rather than deliver up their books; and by this means they were preserved, and outlived the rage of ten persecutions. The writings of Celsus and Porphyry were (like those which this gentleman's friend the Rabbi furnishes him with at every turn) senseless, lying invectives, with which, though perhaps many were pleased, yet no one had that value for them, as to run any hazard to preserve them, and therefore they easily fell under the punishment which many thought due to the spite and malice which gave them birth. I commend not their zeal: I wish the books were now extant, and am persuaded that this gentleman and his friends would boast less of them, if they had them, than they do now they want them: for were they extant, what more could they signify than this gentleman's discourses? So far as mere reasoning is concerned, he  
would



would be offended perhaps if we should suspect that he wanted any help from these fathers of infidelity, to find out absurdities, inconsistencies and incredibilities, in the letter of the Scriptures: and as to the matter of fact, let Celsus or Porphyry, or any other, be supposed to say, with as much assurance as he does, that Jesus was an impostor, and that the history of his miracles, as given us by the Evangelists, is a mere fable: the question, after all, will be, whom are we to believe? that they, or any authorities they could bring to vouch for them, could have better opportunities of knowing the truth, than the Evangelists had, is absolutely impossible; and that any of them have given any such proofs of their honesty and sincerity, as the Evangelists did, a man must have no sense of shame that can maintain.

The next, and only remaining objection, is drawn from † “the unnatural and preposterous order of time (as he is pleased to express himself) in which these three miracles are related, which (says he) just-

† P. 6.



ly brings them all under suspicion of fable and forgery." The gentleman makes great to do with this observation. I shall represent the full strength of it in a very few words.

The case then is this : these three are all the instances we have upon record of Jesus's power, in raising the dead to life, his own resurrection excepted ; and all of them are not recorded by each of the Evangelists. The history of Jairus's daughter is mentioned by three of them, viz. Matthew, Mark, and Luke : that of the widow's son, is related by St. Luke alone ; and that of Lazarus only by St. John, who has omitted to speak of the other two : this is matter of fact. From hence the objector argues, that it is very unlikely that these stories should be any of them true : for, says he, " these three miracles are not equally great, but differ in degree : the greatest is that of Lazarus ; next to it is that of the widow's son ; and least of all, that of Jairus's daughter. What then could be the reason that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who all wrote their Gospels before John, should omit to  
record



record this remarkable, and most illustrious miracle of Lazarus? and why too did not Matthew and Mark mention the story of the widow of Nain's son? to aggrandize the fame of their master for a worker of miracles, was the design of all the Evangelists; and if it was not necessary that all of them should set down every miracle of this kind, still it is absurd and unnatural to suppose that any of them (especially the first writers) should omit the greatest of all, which would have done him most credit, and take notice only of the least. If Matthew had recorded only the story of Lazarus, Luke had added that of the widow's son; and John lastly had remembered us of Jairus's daughter, which the other Evangelists, studying brevity, had omitted, then all had been well, and no objection had hence lain against the authority of the Evangelists: but as the case now stands, it looks as if there were three romantick writers, who strove to outstretch one another in their several stories. The first was sparing and modest in his romance: the second, being sensible of the insufficiency of the former's tale, devises a  
mira-



miracle of a bigger size ; which still not proving sufficient to the end proposed, the third writer, rather than his prophet's honour should sink for want of a resurrection miracle, forges a monstrously huge one ; against which it will be always objection enough, that it was not related by the first historian, nor invented by the last, till he was above a hundred years old, in his dotage, and every body dead that should have confuted him."

Thus stands the objection ; upon which I cannot help making one general remark, viz. that there is a great deal too much to be true. Here is a design of imposing upon mankind, by a fabulous history of sham miracles, to aggrandize the fame of a pretended prophet, fathered upon the Evangelists : this design is represented as, within some few years after its first broaching, (like a weak and crazy building) always tottering, and ready to fall, and wanting at every turn to be propt up by some new forgery : the histories of St. Matthew and St. Mark are supposed, in virtue of one, and that a small resurrection miracle, to have been the first support to the prophet's  
de-



declining honour ; but this proving too weak to sustain the encreasing weight, out comes St. Luke, some years after, with a new one, and a bigger ; and St. John, for the like reason, with another bigger than that, at some greater distance of time. I will venture to say, that there never was any state of the Christian church that will agree with this representation, nor is there indeed any thing so void of probability. The Gospel, from its first promulgation, was every day gaining ground, so that there was no occasion, in order to support its sinking credit, to have recourse to new forgeries : nor if there had been occasion, could the project have possibly succeeded, since whatever discredited any old forgery, must much more have discredited any new one, against which the very novelty of it would have been an unanswerable objection. But not to pursue this writer in his peculiar way of arguing upon the case (which would be an endless task) I will apply myself directly to the single point, which comprehends the whole difficulty ; namely, if these two miracles were really wrought, how came it to pass, that neither

St.



St. Matthew, nor St. Mark took any notice of them? that they should be ignorant, or have forgot that they were wrought, is incredible: and that they should knowingly have omitted them may seem very strange, considering how many miracles they have both of them set down, which are less remarkable than these. This is all that we have to answer for, and if we can answer satisfactorily, the whole objection must fall of course. There can be no occasion to consider both cases distinctly; what serves for one will also serve for the other. Taking therefore the case of Lazarus, which may seem liable to most exception, I shall endeavour to shew, that the silence of the preceding Evangelists is no sort of proof, that this story was forged by St. John.

The gentleman lays it down as the principle upon which he builds, that † “the design of all the Evangelists was to aggrandize their master’s fame as a worker of miracles;” which, abating something for the indecency of the expression, is very

† P. 7.

true;



true ; the Evangelists recorded the miracles of Jesus Christ for the same reason for which he wrought them ; which was to shew, that he was a prophet sent from God : but through vanity and ostentation they recorded nothing ; and therefore instead of setting down all the miracles which our Saviour wrought (which as St. John intimates, was scarce practicable) they content themselves each of them to mention so many as seemed to be sufficient. Thus far, I think, there is no harm ; for the gentleman does not pretend to say, that it was necessary that all the miracles wrought by our Saviour should have been recorded by each particular Evangelist ; on the contrary he confesses, as to that particular kind of miracle now under consideration (to wit, the raising the dead to life) that † “one instance was enough : but, says he, which should they (St. Matthew and St. Mark) as wise and considerate historians, have made choice of, the greatest or the least miracle ? the greatest, to be sure, and that was that of Lazarus, or of the widow’s

† P. 9.



son, if they knew of either: but instead of these they tell us the story of Jairus's daughter, that is, of an imperfect and disputable miracle in comparison of the other two, which consequently they knew nothing at all of, or they would have preferred the report of them.

To confine myself, as I said before, to the case of Lazarus, and to give the gentleman some relief under his difficulty (for to say the truth, it is in a great measure a difficulty of his own making) I desire in the first place, that he would consider what foundation there is in reason and truth, to make that mighty distinction between these two miracles, which this argument supposes. The raising Jairus's daughter, you see, was but a pitiful business in comparison to the resurrection of Lazarus, which was a huge, most prodigious, most stupendous and superlatively great miracle. It concerned him to raise the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection as much as he could; for the greater the difference, the better his argument, which must drop at once if the difference were little or none at all; because of two miracles equal, or next to equal,

equal,



equal, an historian may certainly, without any reflection upon his judgment, chuse which he will record : where then I ask is that mighty difference between these two miracles ? I hope we shall hear no more of “an insignificant girl of twelve years old,” nor that it will be expected that I should shew over again, against this writer (who is pleased here to call it “an imperfect and disputable miracle”) that according to all the circumstances of the story, the child was dead and known to be so by all about her. Now if she was really dead, the miracle in raising her from the dead was just as great as that of raising Lazarus ; for between dead, and dead, there is no difference : but Lazarus, you will say, had been buried four days ; what then ? he could be but dead, if he had been buried fifty : the utmost that you can make of this circumstance is, that there was greater evidence that Lazarus was dead, than there was that Jairus’s daughter was dead, and even this is not certain : that Jairus’s daughter was not dead so long as Lazarus, is very sure, but how long she was dead, the story does not say ; and it

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it is evident from experience, that there are some tokens which will as infallibly prove a person to be dead from the time of his expiring, as if he had been in the grave many days : but be this as it will, the Evangelists that first recorded the story of this woman, did not want evidence that she was dead, nor suspect that any body else wanted it ; and therefore this miracle could not but appear to them as great a miracle, as the raising a person from the dead, under any circumstances, could afford.

But let it be supposed, that the resurrection of Lazarus was the greater miracle of the two ; why must the omitting to record this story be looked upon as an instance of so great weakness or carelessness in St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, that rather than it should be omitted, St. John must presently be given up as guilty of forgery ? St. John affirms, that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead : the other no where deny this, only they make no mention of it. Will you now pretend to say, that a mere negative against the truth of this miracle shall avail more than plain  
and



and direct evidence for it? it is absurd to say so; and the reason why it is absurd is this, that it is infinitely more easy to conceive that those other Evangelists should omit to mention this miracle, notwithstanding it was the greater of the two, than that St. John, who has given such undoubted proofs of his integrity, should falsify in this case. The reasons which have been offered by Grotius, and others, to account for this omission, our writer rejects as weak and insufficient, but scorns to tell us why. His pretence for this is, that † “it is not worth while to consider them, till somebody shall appear in the defence of them,” which is something pretty extraordinary: against whom, or against what should we defend them? these reasons are what they always were, and if it is none of his business to oppose them, surely it is much less ours to vindicate them. What Grotius says is this, that when the first Evangelists wrote, Lazarus was living, and that the inserting his case into their history, might possibly have brought him

† P. 15.

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undet some ill treatment from the Jews : to which Dr. Whitby adds, that it might seem less needful to mention a miracle concerning a person living so near Jerufalem, where there was so great a fame thereof, and so many living witneffes. When the gentleman has time enough to spare, he may shew, if he thinks fit, why either, or both of these conjectures, may not be admitted as probable.

He is pleased to alledge in support of his argument, that † “ the first writer of the life of an hero, to be sure, makes mention of all the grand occurrences of it, and leaves no room for biographers afterwards, but to enlarge and paraphrase upon what he has written, with some other circumstances and addition of less moment.” In which account the gentleman seems to have had in view some learned historian, antient or modern (who undertakes to treat of things with great order and exactness) and to have forgotten that the question concerns such plain, artless men as Matthew, Mark, and Luke ; but the use that

† P. 7.

he



he makes of this observation is not to be endured. “If a third or fourth biographer after him shall presume to add a more illustrious transaction of the hero’s life, it will be rejected as fable and romance, though for no other reason than this, that the first writer must have been apprized of it, and would have inserted its story, if there had been any truth in it.” I deny it, Sir; nobody judges in this manner, except it be in certain cases, which at present we have nothing to do with: if the first writer be supposed to report things which happened in his own times, and the second to have lived some considerable distance from him, the rule will hold; because in that case, the first writer had certainly the best opportunity of coming at the truth, and the fact omitted by him, and reported by the second, may reasonably enough be presumed to have been taken upon slender authority: it will likewise hold between two contemporary historians, provided there be any concurrent proofs which justly render the second writer suspicious: but do but suppose the case to happen between two writers, recording matters in which they



themselves were both personally concerned, and that those writers have given both of them equal and sufficient evidence of their honesty and integrity, and there is no one of common sense who will not impute such an omission to want of exactness in the first writer, or to any other cause, rather than charge the second with forgery.

One thing should be taken notice of before I dismiss this subject, which is, that the supposing this story to be a forgery of St. John's, seems not to be consistent with that account of it which this writer elsewhere principally insists upon; namely, that it was a cheat contrived between Jesus and Lazarus, in which Jesus was publickly detected, and for which he was arraigned and condemned by the Jews. A forgery is properly a story of a man's own invention, which has no foundation in fact. A cheat is a real transaction, deceiving you only in some particular circumstance. But this is not worth insisting upon; for whether it were a cheat, or whether it were a forgery, it will equally affect the credit of Jesus and his doctrine; but our great comfort



fort is, that it could be neither; and that for this plain reason, that if St. John had either invented a story which had never been heard of before, or endeavoured to revive an old cheat publickly detected and exposed, to make it pass upon the world as a real miracle, nobody would have believed him. It is in vain to say, that St. John wrote this story ‡ “after the Jewish state was dissolved, their judicial records destroyed, and every body dead that should confute him :” for if this story was pure invention, it would have confuted itself; because if such a thing was really transacted, the memory of it must have been preserved; and so must the memory of so remarkable a cheat so publickly detected. St. John wrote his Gospel not above sixty years after the thing happened, nor much above twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem; at which time there was probably a great number of witnesses every where alive (and especially in and about Jerusalem) who could remember the whole affair, and would have been able effectually

‡ P. 53.



ally to have blasted the credit of the story, and of the author both.

What has been said is sufficient, I think, to answer this writer's cavils, and therefore I take leave of Mr. Woolston: but for the reader's satisfaction shall add one general observation upon St. John's Gospel, which will help to set this matter in a very clear light. It was a tradition in the antient church, that St. John wrote his history at the request of the Asian bishops, to supply the defects of the former Evangelists. The authorities upon which this account stands may be found in most of the commentators, and therefore it is not necessary to repeat them here: but the history itself greatly favours this notion, which whoever will take the pains to compare with those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he will find that it consists almost entirely of such occurrences as are nowhere to be found in any of those Evangelists. Not to mention many other particulars of this sort; the miracles of our Saviour, recorded by St. John, antecedent to his resurrection, are in all but eight; viz. 1. His turning water into wine at the mar-



marriage in Cana of Galilee. 2. His telling the Samaritan woman the secrets of her life. 3. His healing the nobleman's son at Capernaum. 4. His curing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. 5. His feeding five thousand men with five barley loaves and two fishes. 6. His walking upon the water, and calming a storm at sea. 7. His giving sight to a man born blind, by anointing his eyes with clay, and sending him to wash in Siloam. 8. His raising Lazarus from the dead : all which miracles are omitted by the former Evangelists, except the fifth and the sixth ; and these two St. John seems to have recorded chiefly to introduce a moral discourse which our Saviour took occasion to make to the people, whereof the former Evangelists had taken no notice ; and therefore the silence of the former Evangelists is not a stronger objection against the history of Lazarus, than it is against many other facts recorded by St. John, or, to speak more properly, than it is against his whole Gospel. But how it should be an objection against St. John, either in the whole, or in part, it is impossible to understand : for when a writer pro-



professedly undertakes to supply the defects of former historians, does not the undertaking itself imply, that he is to mention many things by them omitted? how else are these defects supplied? or how can such defects at any time be supplied, if the very attempt to supply them is to be looked upon as a sufficient reason, why the later historian shall be charged with forgery? You may think it perhaps a disparagement to the three former Evangelists, that their histories of the life and actions of our Saviour, should have any such imperfection as to make it worth St. John's while to write a new one by way of supplement: but the primitive Christians were of another mind; and it is well worth observing what Eusebius says upon this very case, which is to this effect, viz. that the Apostles of Christ, though under the power and direction of the spirit of God, were not masters in all the niceties of language, nor instructed in all the arts necessary to form compleat historians\*. Their writings at this day shew as much; for not one of

\* Eccl. Histor. Lib. 3. Cap. 24.

them



them have given us an exact history of Christ : all of them have omitted many things which the others, one or more of them, have recorded : and even St. John himself confesses, that his own Gospel, though it supplied the defects of the former Evangelists in many respects, left the history of Jesus still unfinished ; for thus he concludes, *and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.* Joh. xx. 30.

The reason of all which is to be resolved, as in all like cases, into the judgment and discretion of these several historians, who out of that infinite variety of miracles wrought by our Saviour, chose each of them such as seemed to them to be most material ; and if upon the whole, the good providence of God hath so ordered it, that there is enough recorded to lay the foundation for a reasonable faith, we ought to be contented, and should not be so absurd as to throw away what we have, because it is not all ; nor busy ourselves in enquiring minutely why this miracle was not recorded rather than another, when there is not so much as one of them that is not wonderful



ful even beyond comparifon. To go on with St. John.

From what has been faid it appears, that the Afian churches were, before the writing of his Gospel, well affured of the truth of many remarkable facts relating to the hiftory of Chrift, which were omitted by the other Evangelifts, otherwife they could have had no pretence to apply to St. John to fupply the defects of thofe other Evangelifts. It appears farther, that the Gospel of St. John is an authentic account of fuch facts : for had St. John given a hiftory of any other facts than what were well known to the church before he wrote them, the queftion would have been obvious, how came it to pafs that thefe things were never heard of till now ? which would have been an objection againft his hiftory never to have been gotten over ; but if you fuppofe that what himfelf was an eye-witnefs of, and had been constantly received in the church of God, as well upon his testimony, as the testimony of others ; That, and That only, he inserted in his Gospel, as thinking it too material to be left any longer merely  
to



to the conveyance of tradition ; as this implies no greater deficiency in the former Evangelists than what is consistent with sound sense, considering the quality and condition of those writers, so it will alone account for that universal esteem which this Gospel obtained from the beginning in the Christian world.



SEVENTH PART. 109

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impulse no greater liberty to the for-  
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with sound logic, considering the quality  
and condition of the witness. It is not  
therefore a matter for that universal effect  
which the Gospel obtained from the be-  
ginning in the Christian world.

DISCUSSION

ON THE NATURE OF THE  
GOSPEL

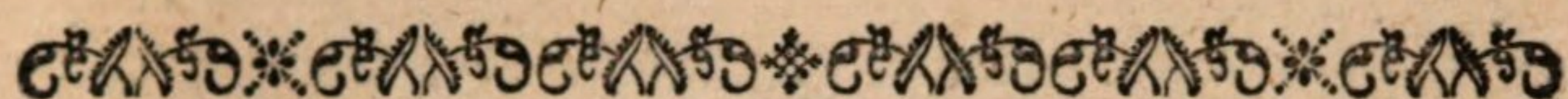
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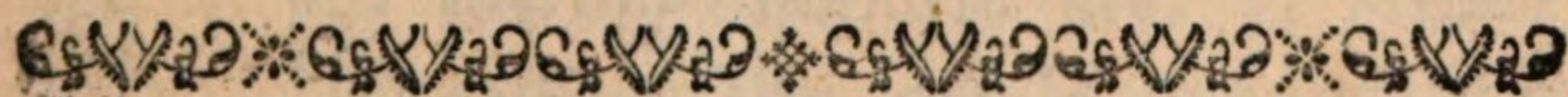
A

DISCOURSE

O N

Our SAVIOUR's Miraculous  
Power of Healing.

In which the six cases excepted  
against by Mr. Woolston are  
considered.—written in the year  
1730.





CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

A  
DISCOURSE  
ON

OUR SAVIOUR'S ABASCATIONS  
FROM THE TOWER OF BABEL.

IN WHICH THE TWO CHURCHES  
ARE COMPARED BY MR. WOOLSTON  
AND THE TRUTH OF THE  
MATTER IS PROVED.

BY JOHN WATSON, M.A.





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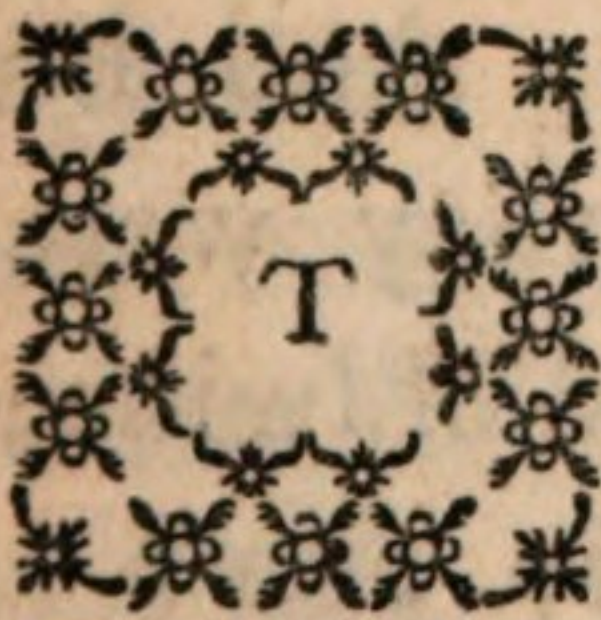
# DISCOURSE

O N

Our SAVIOUR'S Miraculous  
Power of Healing, &c.



## INTRODUCTION.

 HE cases treated of in the following discourse are, 1. Jesus's casting the devils out of the madmen. 2. His healing the woman that was afflicted with an issue of blood. 3. His curing the woman that laboured under a spirit of infirmity. 4. His  
P heal-



healing a man at the pool of Bethesda.

5. His giving sight to a man that was born blind. 6. His curing the man that was sick of the palsy. The particulars whereof, as they are recorded by the Evangelists, I have placed here in one view for the reader's ease.

I. "When Jesus was come with his disciples into the country of the Gadarens, or Gergasens, there met him two men possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way : and they cried out, saying, what have we to do with thee, Jesus thou son of God ?—and there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding ; and the devils besought Jesus, saying, if thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go : and when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine ; and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters." Matt. viii. 28. See Mark v. 1. Luke viii. 26.

II. "When



II. “ When Jesus was going to Jairus’s house, in order to raise his daughter from the dead, a certain woman, who had been afflicted with an issue of blood twelve years, and had spent all her substance upon physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, came behind him and touched the hem of his garment : (for she said within herself, if I may but touch his garment I shall be whole :) upon which Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her he said, Daughter be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”  
Matt. ix. 20. Mark v. 25. Luke viii. 43.

III. “ As Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity ; and he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight.”  
Luke xiii. 10.



IV. “ At the feast of the passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, where was a pool called Bethesda, at which lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water : for an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water ; and whosoever first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. Now a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years : and when Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole ? the impotent man answered, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool, and while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus then saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed and walk ; and immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.” John v. 1.

V. “ Whilst Jesus was at Jerusalem he saw a man that was blind from his birth : upon which, spitting on the ground he  
made



made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go wash in the pool of Siloam : the man went his way and washed and received his sight." John ix. 1.

VI. "When Jesus was at Capernaum, a great multitude resorted to the house where he was ; infomuch that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door : and they come unto him bringing one sick of the palsy, which was born of four ; and when they could not come nigh him for the throng, they went up to the house top and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus ; who seeing their faith, said to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee ; arise take up thy bed and go into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed and went forth before them all." Mark ii. 1. Luke v. 17.



**T**HE cases being thus briefly related, we are now to enquire.

*First,* Whether these cases, as they stand in the Gospels, can be accounted for in a natural way (as Mr. W. does sometimes suppose) and without allowing in our blessed Saviour a power of working miracles?

*Secondly,* Whether these cases, as they are recorded, stand connected with any such circumstances, as give any occasion for the charge of absurdity brought against them?

The first case is that of curing the madmen; which is to be considered at present simply as a cure of madness; because the circumstance of casting out the devils, wherewith they were said to have been possessed, and of the suffering those devils afterwards to enter into the herd of swine, how much soever they may affect the credibility of the relation, certainly cannot affect the reality of the miracle: for to cure madness in an instant, by the speaking of a word, is a miraculous thing, whether the cause of that madness be supposed to be diabolical possession or any thing else: for this question is concerned purely with  
the



the reality of the distemper, and not with the cause from whence it proceeds. If a man has the gout, whether it proceeds from an evil habit of body derived from his parents, or from an intemperate way of living, or from the possession of a devil, yet to cure it by the speaking of a word, would be equally in any of the cases, miraculous. Now that these men were really mad the account shews; for they “wore no cloaths, neither abode in any house, but among the tombs and upon the mountains;” they “were exceeding fierce, so that no man could bind them, no not with chains;” which are as plain evidences of madness as can be. That they were cured is also clear; for when some “came out of the city to see Jesus, they found this mad man sitting and cloathed, and in his right mind:” so that this case, at least, as it stands recorded in the Gospel, must be admitted as a plain instance of a miracle. To this first case, the last is not unlike; for here was a man so much affected with the palsy as that he was quite unable to help himself, who yet upon Jesus’s only saying to him “arise; arose, took up his bed and walked.”



These two cases the objector himself has allowed, I think, to be unexceptionable. The facts he denies, for reasons which shall be considered in their proper place: but admitting the facts, he does not dispute the miracle, as indeed no one of common sense can; and I think that Mr. W's uncommon sense does not carry him so far.

In the second, third, and fourth cases, the gentleman pursues a different method: for here he allows the facts (or seems at least to allow them) but denies the miracles. Let us take therefore these cases in order as they stand, and consider his reasoning.

The first of these three cases is that of the woman that was diseased with an issue of blood. In which says he, † “to please our divines I will allow as much of the truth of the letter of the story as they can desire.” And in particular, he admits that she was “*ἀίμορρῶσα*, obnoxious to bleeding;” which distemper he all along supposes to have been of twelve years standing. Nor does he call in question the particular

† Sixth discourse, P. 8, 9.



manner, in which the Evangelists tell us the cure was wrought, namely, that it was done in virtue of the woman's "touching the hem of Christ's garment," as if it were falsely reported : thus far all is well. Now this being admitted as a true relation, it will, I believe, puzzle any man of common apprehension, to conjecture how the gentleman goes to work to avoid the necessity of confessing that here was a miracle wrought : for to cure a person of an inveterate hæmorrhage, to which all the means of art had been administered in vain, merely by the touch of the hem of a man's garment is surely a miracle, or it will be the hardest thing in the world to say what is a miracle. But he tells us, that, \* "as to the nature of the disease of this woman, we are much in the dark about it, and very uncertain of what kind and degree it was—it might be for ought we know, only a little bleeding at the nose that now and then she was subject to, or it might be an obnoxiousness to an evacuation of blood, by"—I do not at all

\* Ibid. P. 10, 11.

think



think it needful to pursue the learned conjectures. Be it supposed that this bleeding was from the nose, or from any other part of the body, still it was a disease, and an inveterate disease, which no art that she had ever tried could cure. The gentleman amuses himself to as little purpose, when he tells us, that the \* “woman subsisting so long under her issue of blood—it could not be very grievous—that this hæmorrhage was rather, perhaps, of advantage to the health of the patient than of danger to her—yea, that Jesus’s cure of this woman might be a precipitation of her death, for (which is the only true thing he says) she died some time after it, rather than a prolongation of her life.” You see the power of imagination! If you will allow the gentleman that the case was what it was not, he will be able to prove that there was no miracle. The history says, that the woman had been twelve years diseased: that no art, no skill of the physician could cure her. Mr. W. thinks what the Scripture calls a disease, was her

\* P. 11, 12.



health and her life ; which is not writing against the old history, but giving us a new one : surely he is a mystical physician, as well as a mystical divine ; or else from the plain Scripture History of this distemper, he never could have raised such conclusions !

As to his general assertion, that † “ the bodily disease of the woman should have been clearly and fully represented to our understanding, or we can form no conception of Christ’s power in the cure of it,” I can by no means agree to it ; because it implies that we can never know a man to be sick, unless we understand the nature of his distemper. The case is quite otherwise : we send for physicians to our friends, because we see they are sick, and because we do not ourselves understand their distempers ; in some cases our physicians are puzzled, and at a loss to know the nature of the patient’s disease : in such a case, which is of all others the most desperate and remediless, will Mr. W. say, that there is no distemper, because no one

† P. 13.



understands what it is? in the present case, if a distemper of twelve years standing, and which had so long eluded all the art of physick, was cured by a single touch of Christ's garment, is it possible to imagine, that there was nothing miraculous in the cure?

It is scarce worth notice, what the gentleman is pleased to suggest as to the means, by which this cure was wrought, namely, that the effect which followed upon the woman's touching the hem of Christ's garment, might have been owing purely \* "to the force of imagination." No doubt this woman had before, either been an eye-witness of Christ's miraculous power of healing diseases, or had had the assurances of it from others upon authorities not to be disputed: full of this persuasion she comes to Christ, and as the reward of her faith, God was pleased to grant her what she wished for, a releasement from her bodily infirmity; it is thus that the Scripture represents the case. Now if this gentleman will say that this cure was not the ef-

\* Ibid. P. 14.



fect of the miraculous power of God, but of a strong imagination; I know not indeed, as he says, "who can help it." But there is one thing, I am sure, which a wise man will find himself as little able to help, and that is, pitying the extravagancy of a thought, which has not the least appearance of reason to support it. It is an easy thing to harangue in general terms upon the force of imagination in certain cases: but the proper proof in the matter before us, would have been to have produced some unquestionable instance of a disease, attended with circumstances parallel to these, which has been cured by imagination. When the gentleman has done this, it will be time enough to consider the case farther; and till then, all that he can say will only shew his own temper and spirit, but cannot diminish from the credit of the story with any who are disposed to consider cases of this sort, with any degree of judgment and impartiality.

To go on therefore to the next case, namely, that of another woman who had a "spirit of infirmity." This distemper, whatever it was, is spoken of by our Saviour



viour himself, as inflicted by some evil spirit : for he tells us, that she had been “bound of Satan for eighteen years ;” and the visible effect of this was, that she “was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself :” yet upon “Jesus’s laying his hands on her immediately she was made straight.” What says the gentleman to this ? why † “taking the devil out of the story, there is no more in it than what is common.”—very well, Sir ; we will drop this circumstance of the devil’s being concerned in the case for the present, and see what you will make of it. What is it that you here say is common ? why, that a \* “drooping, stooping, vaporous woman, full of fancies, should be cheared and elated upon the comfortable advice and admonition of a reputedly wise and good man !” I think verily, that the question with the gentleman upon this case, is already brought to a very short issue. The history says, that this woman was afflicted with a weakness of eighteen years continuance, which had so much disabled her, that she could not

† *P.* 28.      \* *P.* 27, 28.



stand upright. The gentleman in effect says, that this was not the case, and that the woman had not really any such distemper. What now must we believe? shall we credit those who saw the woman, and saw the cure; or must we give credit to Mr. W's. new history of this woman, which he delivers as confidently indeed as if she had been his intimate acquaintance, but whom he never saw, of whom he had never heard, but for the history, which he pretends to correct. If he may be allowed to write history out of his own head, and to throw out of the story every thing that is miraculous; he may well say, what is there in this more than common? but does not this shifting the case shew, to demonstration, that even in this writer's own opinion, here is an instance of a miracle impossible to be withstood? It is just in the same manner that he has treated the fourth case, which is next to follow; that, I mean, of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. † "The worst, says he, that can be made of this man's case is, that he

† Third discourse, P. 35.



was troubled with laziness more than lameness---or that if he was no dissembler, he was only fancifully sick : and the best that can be made of Jesus's power in the cure of him is, that by some proper and seasonable talk, he touched his heart to his relief, and so by the help of his own imagination was cured, and went his way." The best and the worst that can be made,---from whence? why from the Scripture History, or he says nothing; but of the truth of this let the meanest reader judge. The history says, that he "had an infirmity thirty-eight years:" now though it is granted (as he observes) that † "the word ἀδυναμία, weakness or infirmity, is a general name of all distempers, yet some distemper or other it certainly signifies; and the circumstances of the place shew thus far what this man's distemper was, viz. that he was some way or other disabled in his limbs, for he could not get into the pool without help: so that whatever the gentleman's private opinion as to the nature of this man's case may be (which is nothing at

† Third discourse, P. 47.



all to the purpose) the Scripture evidently speaks of it as a real lameness, which I hope he will not say was capable of being cured merely by the force of imagination. If the objector could have produced any circumstances from the history tending to shew that these persons laboured under no real distemper, this had been something ; but since he has not attempted this, and there is indeed not the least shew of any such inconsistency, I shall venture to set down these two cases likewise, as what do appear upon the face of the Scripture History to be undoubted instances of Jesus's miraculous power of healing diseases.

The only case which now remains to be considered, is that of Jesus's cure of the blind man ; which the gentleman has been pleased to treat in such a manner as to leave it very uncertain to his readers how much of the fact he admits, and how much he denies. Sometimes he seems to allow that the man was really blind ; at other times, and that not seldom, he intimates as if his eyes might have been only sore : but that there was any miracle in  
Q this



this case he denies absolutely ; for, \* “ miracle, says he, I can see none.” It is not worth the while to lay together what he says upon the first head ; for whatever his meaning is, the sense of the Scripture is clear and cannot be mistaken. The man we are there told was blind, and born blind ; and since nothing is offered to shew the contrary, we must take the case to have been as it is reported, and then see how the gentleman will get rid of the miracle.

He observes in the first place, that † “ we know nothing of the nature of this poor man's blindness, nor what was the defect of his eyes ; nor whether it was curable by art or not ; without which knowledge, says he, it is impossible and unreasonable to assert, that there was a miracle wrought in the cure of him.” This is one instance, among many others, of Mr. W's. great want of consideration. A broken bone is a malady certainly curable by art ; and yet should any one be able, without the help of common applications, to restore a broken limb instantly ; sup-

\* Fourth discourse, P. 6,      † Ibid. P. 7, 8.



pose, by touching it with his finger, it would be a miracle. A miracle is shewn by the manner of the cure as well as by the matter of it; and therefore admit, that this man's blindness was indeed curable by art (which it will be a hard matter to prove) still if our Saviour cured it without the use of any means, that have a natural virtue to cure blindness; will any man be so unreasonable as to say, that the cure was not miraculous? Mr. W. himself will answer, no: for he tells us he † “will yield---that if Jesus had used no medicines; if with only a word of his mouth, he had cured the man, and he had instantaneously recovered as the word was spoken, here would have been a real and great miracle, let the blindness or imperfection of the man's sight be of what kind or degree soever.” To what purpose then was it to alledge our ignorance of the nature of this man's blindness, as an objection against the miracle? or what sort of opinion must the gentleman have of his readers, when he thought that they would bear to be thus

† P. 9.

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treated?



treated? Will you now, Sir, be pleased to tell us what it is that you find fault with? why Jesus did not cure this man's blindness by speaking a word, but, it seems, † “used washings and ointments and balsams, which, says he, absolutely spoils and destroys the credit of the miracle.” What are these washings, and ointments, and balsams, the gentleman talks of? “Jesus, we read, spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and then bad him to go wash in the pool of Siloam,” that is, in a common river. Have these things any natural virtue to cure blindness? he himself would laugh at any one that should say so; “a strange and an odd sort of an ointment, that I believe was never used before or since, for sore and blind eyes!” I think so too; and his ridicule would be very just, if it could be imagined that our Saviour used it as a means, naturally proper to work the cure he intended: but as it is certain, that Jesus could have no such view, the ridicule must fall upon himself,

† P. 9.

in



in alledging this as a disparagement of the miracle, which might, for ought we know, as well have been effected without it; for where is the difference between using no outward application at all, and using such an outward application as has no natural virtue to effect a cure?

It would be very easy to observe, that an instantaneous cure of any blindness by such kind of applications, is a thing that was never heard of. But there is no occasion to insist upon these matters; because it is plain that our Saviour used neither ointment nor washing that could have any virtue in the case. The objector is so sensible of this, supposing the ointment to have been what the history says it was, that, to † help himself out, he seems willing to insinuate, that this effect might be “accounted for, by supposing that Jesus imperceptibly had in his mouth, a proper unctuous and balsamick substance, which he dissolved into spittle:” but in this he tells us, he wants the assistance of some “skilful professors in physick and surgery,

† P. 10, 14.

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and



and wonders that none of them, who may be supposed to be a little disaffected to Christianity, have as yet bent their thoughts this way." If I could believe the gentleman to be in earnest, I would advise him to consult some experienced physicians and surgeons, and hear what they have to say. The decent manner in which he has treated this learned faculty, with the good sense of the question he has to propose to them, no doubt will procure him a reception suitable to his merit.

But \* " what then, says the objector, was the reason of Jesus's using this strange eye-salve," since it had no medicinal virtue? to which question he shall receive an answer in due time. At present we have no occasion to consider this point; because whatever was the reason, why Jesus used this ointment, the miracle will stand just as it does. We are therefore got through these six cases, and it appears that taking them as they are recorded by the Evangelists, they are all of them miraculous: this was our first head of enquiry.

\* P. 12.



The second is, whether these cases stand connected with any such circumstances, as are sufficient to support the charge of absurdity laid against them. This is what I am next to consider; and with a view to this question, I shall once more run over these cases in the order in which I have placed them.

The first case is that of Christ's curing the madmen; to which miracle there is this circumstance connected, that "this madness was occasioned by evil spirits, who had taken possession of them; who being cast out, were permitted to enter into a herd of swine, who thereupon ran down a precipice, and were all choaked in the sea." In this circumstance, one thing perhaps, that may give the gentleman offence is, that the Gospel asserts the being of evil spirits, and their agency in bringing bodily diseases, and other mischiefs upon men. He does not indeed offer this as an objection in direct terms, in the story before us; but since he has † elsewhere given us plainly enough to understand that he laughs at

† Second discourse, P. 40 to 45.



every thing of this kind, it will not be improper once for all to say in a few words, what may reasonably be said upon this subject.

It must be observed then, that the nature of the argument does not oblige us to set out our proofs that there are such beings as evil spirits, or to determine how far they are concerned in the affairs of this world. The Gospel supposes such beings, and that they sometimes are suffered to have an influence in the affairs of this world. This is made an objection against the authority of the Gospel. To maintain this objection therefore, those who make it must prove, either that there are no such beings, or that if there are, they cannot possibly have any thing to do with human affairs; otherwise the supposition of such beings will be no objection against the Gospel or any part of it: and what can any man have to say in order to shew that there are no evil spirits, that is not the effect of mere prejudice? When we speak of a spirit, we speak of an invisible being: and that there is one invisible being at least, all must confess who are not downright atheists; for  
God



God is, though we see him not : and that there may possibly be a great variety of invisible beings as well as one, nothing can hinder any man from conceiving but a certain narrowness of thought, which a very little philosophy will enable us to conquer, and is incident only to those who are not at all accustomed to think. I doubt not but that if some gentlemen had lived a hundred years ago, and had been told of that numberless variety of imperceptible animals, that have lately become visible by the help of glasses, they would have made as great a joke of them as they do now of spirits. If the being of such animals does not prove the being of spirits (as it certainly does not) it will help us to conceive that there may be spirits ; for it shews there may be many real beings that are invisible to us ; and is not this the strongest prejudice against the belief of spirits, that they are invisible ? concerning the nature or substance of a spirit we know nothing more than that it is greatly different from every thing whereof we have any experience : but this can be no good objection ; for who will say it is not as easy for God  
to



to make creatures of different substances ; as it is to make creatures of the same substance differing in shape and proportion ?

As little room for objection is there against the office or employment which the Gospel assigns to these invisible beings ; namely, their being made use of as instruments in the hand of God to execute the works of his providence with regard to men. He hath made the creatures of the visible world instruments both of good and evil to us, and why not those of the invisible world likewise ? why may not God permit us to be hurt by evil spirits, as well as by evil men, or by evil beasts ? or why may not the operation of an evil spirit upon the body create distempers, as well as the operations of many natural substances ? I am persuaded that no answer can be given to these questions, which can in the least stand as a prejudice to the Gospel with reasonable men. And therefore to go on a little farther : what sticks with some people, I know, is this, that we should hear so much of evil spirits taking possession of mens bodies, during the time of the first publication of the Gospel, and nothing  
at



at all of it either before or since : to which the answer is very plain and easy, that then only were these beings known and heard of, because then only those powers were exercised, which alone were able to bring their doings to light. The diseases were visible ; but the cause of them was unknown, till he who wrought the cure made it evident by his power what it was : and possibly should the same power again revive, we might again hear of just the same effects of it. We know little by our reason or our senses, of the being of evil spirits, or of their power, and therefore are apt to make no reckoning of them in considering the possible causes of those effects which we daily see before us ; but should any one say, that even now a great many of those diseases which afflict mankind, are caused by evil spirits : some modern writers would find much more use of their talent for ridicule, than of their reason and understanding, in confuting him.

Let us now come to the matter in hand, and try the weight of the gentleman's objection, which must, I think, be conceived  
to



to stand thus, viz. that \* “it is absurd and unreasonable to believe that the devils or evil spirits, when cast out of the madmen, should be permitted to enter into an herd of swine to their destruction.” This pretended absurdity is supported by two observations, viz. 1. That there was no swine kept in that country. 2. That if there were, Jesus’s destroying so many swine by suffering the devils to enter into them, and drive them into the sea, was an act of injustice. To the first of these observations it may be answered, that there might be swine kept in that country; for that || Gadara was inhabited by Greeks as well as Jews, who might both keep and eat swine; though the Jews were forbidden by their laws to do either. As to the other observation, I will only ask the gentleman this plain question, viz. whether supposing Jesus to have been a prophet, and in consequence hereof to have acted by commission from God, he was, or could be guilty of any injustice in this action? it is plain he could not; because upon this supposition the act

\* Fifth discourse, P. 33. & seq.      || Bishop of St.  
David’s vindic. P. 199.



will come to be considered not as his act, but as an act of Providence. If Jesus had no right to destroy the peoples swine, God, who is the supreme proprietor of the whole earth, most certainly had ; and will you complain of him for such a punishment as this, when you every day see more surprising instances before your eyes ? The gentleman asks, what had this people done to ‡ deserve such usage from Jesus ? would the question be endured if he should ask, what had they done to deserve such usage from God ? is God accountable to such reasoners as these, when they shall demand why he punishes, or why he forbears ? or when we see him lay whole nations waste with pestilence, with famine and with earthquakes, shall we confess his sovereign authority in these cases, and yet upon the loss of two thousand swine cry out and say, why hast thou done thus ? If you are inclined to doubt of the divine commission of Christ, yet it must be for other reasons and not for this : for it can be no reason for denying his divine commission, because

‡ Ibid. P. 34.



he once or twice did the same thing which God does daily : and upon this occasion I cannot help wishing, that those who seem to call in question the authority of the Christian religion, and yet pretend to be real deists, would take care that they do not in their zeal against Revelation advance such notions, which must, if there be any thing in them, entirely subvert the belief of a Providence and all natural religion.

It is hardly worth while to take notice of some other little circumstances in this story, which the gentleman has been pleased to set down as objections against the credibility of it : as, || “ how came those madmen to have their dwelling among the tomb of a burying ground ? where was the humanity of the people that did not take care of them ? I presume the Gospel history may stand very safe though we cannot answer for the actions of madmen ; and if the meaning of the objection is only this, that the people of the country ought to have been more careful than to permit persons in this condition to wander



up and down where they pleased ; this likewise may be admitted without prejudice to the Evangelists. For what ? is not an historian to be credited, unless we can in every minute circumstance account for the conduct of all whom the history concerns ? I wish the gentleman would try his critical skill upon some other writers, and see what consequences would arise in virtue of such notable observations as these. If some author of good account should tell us of a wild bull that had broke loose from his keepers, and done great mischief among the people ; such a story, I suppose, might easily enough find credit, because there is scarcely a country in which instances of this kind do not sometimes happen : and yet, should this objector take in hand to disparage such a writer, might he not cry out with the very same reason that he does here, is it possible ? what sort of people were these, that they did not tie him up fast, or knock him on the head ? I do not find that these poor creatures had really hurt any body, but only that the people were afraid of them ; nor does it appear but that reasonable care had been taken  
to



to prevent mischief: for the history says, that these men had been “often bound with fetters and chains, but that no chains would hold them.” This says the gentleman is hardly credible: perhaps so, to him, who considers this only as a common case of madness; but if he admits (what the history says) that evil spirits were concerned, he will not, I presume, pretend to determine the extent of their power. Besides, by this expression we are not obliged to understand any more than that the usual methods of chaining and fettering madmen had been tried, but to no purpose; which I suppose no reasonable man will say is so strange a thing as to surpass all credibility: and were it such an impossibility for madmen in any country to be at liberty, perhaps we should not have had the trouble of considering these objections.

But there is one objection more, which may perhaps seem to have greater weight in it, and that is this, || “when our Saviour was brought before Pilate to be arraigned,

|| P. 38.

tried,



tried, and condemned, Pilate put this question to the Jews, saying, What evil hath he done? upon which the gentleman observes, that “if this story had been literally true of Jesus, there had been no need of false witnesses against him; for the Gadarens might have deposed, that he had destroyed two thousand of their swine;” but perhaps the people of that country, had not learned to call that injustice, in which they plainly saw the hand of God, and therefore were not disposed themselves to complain: and as for the chief priests they had good reason not to put the cause upon this issue. If the loss of these swine had been pleaded, the first question would have been, how did Jesus destroy them? and this would have led directly to an inquiry into his miraculous power, a point which, as their whole conduct upon this occasion shews, the Jews were resolutely determined not to meddle with. What sort of an advocate this gentleman might have been for the Jews, if he had been there, I cannot tell. If he had believed any thing of evil spirits, he might consistently enough with his own opinion, have

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said, § “ that he believed Christ to be a wizzard, and that the swine were lost through his fascinations ;” but the Jews could with no sort of decency have objected in this manner. Beelzebub was the common cry, when they wanted something to say : but this was not a plea to be trusted, since they had nothing to alledge against Jesus, upon this particular case, to shew that he made use of a diabolical power, which would not have fallen harder upon some of their own prophets. They could not have forgot what Moses, in whom they trusted, did to Corah and all his company, whom he sent down alive into the earth, which opened her mouth to swallow them up. (Num. xvi.) Nor what Elijah did, when he commanded fire to come down from heaven, and consume a hundred men, whom Ahaziah sent to apprehend him. (2 Kings i. 10.) Nor what his successor Elisha did, when he called forth two bears out of the wood, who tare in pieces two and forty children. (2 Kings ii. 23.) These and some other instances of severity, exe-

§ P. 39,

cuted



cuted by their prophets, they must have remembered: and what was the loss of two thousand swine to such destructions as these? No wonder then if they chose to avoid an argument, which might so easily have been turned upon themselves, and had recourse to general accusations of sedition and disaffection to Cæsar, that common artifice, by which thousands have been destroyed or ill treated, whose only faults have been, that their virtues were too considerable.

Other answers might be given to this objection, but I take this one to be sufficient; and since the gentleman has once again called us, to the consideration of the matters objected to our Saviour at his trial before Pilate, I will beg leave in my turn, to propose one difficulty to him, which he may consider of at his leisure. He tells us that Jesus was a cheat: if so, he was surely the most lucky impostor that ever was, if amidst such an infinite variety of impostures (for so we must now call all his miracles) he was not sometimes detected. The gentleman says, that he was detected in the case of Lazarus: and it seems utterly incredible, that he should not have

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been



been detected in many other, if any thing was to be discovered that was otherwise than it ought to have been. Why then this deep silence upon this head, and why so much suborning of witnesses in other cases? why so much stress laid upon a few mistaken words of his about "destroying the temple," and why not one word upon these manifest cheats? what was a general charge of sedition and disaffection compared to a proof that he was a common cheat, and had endeavoured by craft and artifice to make himself popular? But to return.

The two following cases will give us little trouble. In the story of the woman that was diseased with an issue of blood the gentleman has found no circumstances to cavil at: nor in that of the other woman that was bound down by a spirit of infirmity, unless it be that the devil was concerned in the matter; which is a point that has been already spoken to. But the history of the lame man that was cured at the pool of Bethesda is full, it seems, of ‡ absurdities, improbabilities, and incredi-

‡ Third discourse, P. 34.

bilities,



bilities, which have furnished him with much matter of ridicule. His principal objections lie against what we find in St. John's Gospel concerning this pool of Bethesda; as that "an angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water; and that whosoever first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, he was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." But what is all this to our Saviour? has he said one word about the pool, or the virtues of it? Suppose the pool had no virtue, was the man therefore not lame? or was he therefore not cured by our Saviour? Whatever therefore becomes of this story, our Saviour, it is certain, stands quite clear of it: for when he came to the pool, and saw the lame man lying there, he only asked him, whether he "would be made whole?" and, having heard what he had to say, bade him "rise and take up his bed and walk." But concerning the virtue of this pool in curing diseases, what it was, or whence it came, he says not one word. If there be any difficulty in the case, St. John, the writer of the history, is



to answer for it, and perhaps he may have less to answer for than Mr. W. imagines.

For in the first place there is some reason to suspect that the passage about the angel's descent into the pool and troubling the water, at which Mr. W's ridicule is chiefly pointed, is no part of St. John's original Gospel. In some ancient manuscripts it is entirely wanting; in others not admitted into the body of the text, but set down in the margin by some later hand, as the reader may find by consulting Dr. Mills, and his editor Dr. Kuster, to whom it will be enough to refer him for farther satisfaction\*. But to give the English reader a clear notion of this matter, I will set down this passage in our translation, as it is represented in a very ancient Greek manuscript in the king of France's library||.

\* Vid. Milli Prolegom. ad Nov. Test. 433. & Kuster in Præfat. || Vid. Montfaucon Palæographia Græc. p. 214.



Verf. 2. "There is at Jerufalem by the Sheeps market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

Verf. 3. "In theſe lay a great multitude of impotent folk, blind, halt, withered, †

† Waiting for the moving of the waters.

Verf. 4. "For an angel went down at a certain ſeaſon into the pool and troubled the water — whoſoever then firſt, after the troubling of the water, ſtepped in, was made whole of what diſeaſe ſoever he had."

Verf. 5. "And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

Verf. 6. "When Jeſus ſaw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that caſe, he ſaith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

Verf. 7. "The impotent man answered, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled to put me into the pool, but while I am coming another ſteppeth down before me, &c."

You ſee now that the narration, as it now ſtands without the marginal note, contains a full and perfect ſenſe, and gives an



account of the whole action of our Saviour so far as it concerned the lame man and his cure. It is very true that the seventh verse implies some such notion as the fourth distinctly specifies, viz. that upon a certain troubling of the waters there was a cure wrought or expected to be wrought upon the person that could first get into the pool, which was the reason that brought these sick persons together. If you should infer from hence, that St. John wrote the fourth verse, I think you would infer too much : for perhaps when St. John wrote, the notion which brought these people to the pool might be so well understood, that he might not think it needful to give a particular account of it : but as the ancient tradition began to wear off, such an explication was necessary to make the lame man's talk to our Saviour, at the seventh verse, intelligible, which, without such explication, it is certain, would not at this time of day have been understood. This might be the reason why, in some copies, it was at first inserted in the margin of the book ; and how easily it might from thence, by degrees, creep into the text every one

un-



understands, who knows how frequent such instances are in many ancient writers.

I shall leave it to the reader to judge of this account according to his discretion. I think it cannot be denied, that it has at least an appearance of probability. Let us then consider the case upon this foot, and see how it will stand: you say, you cannot believe that an angel went at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water for the benefit of a single person: well, let it alone. Our Saviour, you have seen, in every view stands clear of the matter; and if the foregoing conjecture be admitted, so will the Evangelist, who only reports what the lame man said. He certainly had such a notion as this, and so had many others, or they had never come thither for a cure: and if you should ask, whether this notion was true or false? my answer is, that it is nothing to the purpose; for admit that this was only a vulgar superstition; is it any objection against our Saviour, that he cured a poor superstitious man of his lameness? or against the Evangelist, that he reported, without disguise, his conversation, with our Saviour? You  
may



may think it incredible, perhaps, that there should have been any such superstition : but go into Italy, Spain, or Portugal, and you may see as strange things every day ; and in a lower degree too much of it may be seen even in our own country.

But to wave all this, and suppose this account to be St. John's own : what must we say now ? why says the gentleman, that here is an account of an incredible miracle. Why incredible ? if all miracles are incredible, this may be so too ; but it is no more incredible than others are. If a man reports only common things that happen every day, no one alive will say he reports miracles ; and therefore the very nature of a miracle requires, that the matter of it should contain something uncommon, i. e. (as our author will say) something incredible. We cannot move waters, and by moving them, give them a medicinal virtue ; but does it follow that God cannot ? The waters of Jordan at our command will not cure a leprosy ; but does it follow that Naaman the Syrian was not healed, when he used this remedy by God's command ? If you ask, why such a miracle was vouchsafed



safed the Jews in their worst and most corrupted state? I will answer you, when you tell me why they were preserved in the wilderness after their many rebellions against God. Even in the common acts of Providence it is easy to see the work, but often hard to see the reason. In miraculous works, which are out of the common road of nature, it must be much more so: which observation may serve also for an answer to a question of Mr. W's, why one sick person only was cured by the moving of the waters, when there were many who wanted it? He has other questions also which I will repeat, that I may not seem to forget them; as "how often in a week, month, or year, did the angel vouchsafe his descent into the pool? for how many ages before Christ's advent; and why not since, and even now, was this gracious angelical favour granted?" to all which I answer, that I cannot resolve his doubts: but surely, God may dispense his own gifts, in what manner, and in what measure he pleases, and is not bound to satisfy the curiosity of such forward and busy inquirers as this, when they shall think  
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fit to demand a reason of his proceedings. Why is it a greater objection against this miracle, that the angel cured but one, than it is against Christ's miracle, that he cured but one? There were many infirm persons at the pool when he came, and yet but one of them was healed. Right, says the gentleman, and therefore I will believe neither the one nor the other. † "If Christ could not cure them all, there is an end of his power of miracles; and if he would not, it was want of mercy and compassion in him: which way soever we take this case it turns to the dishonour of Jesus." He that can want an answer to such reasoning as this, I think is hardly capable of any: that Jesus could have cured all those sick persons, and all sick persons in the world besides, with as much ease as he cured that one, no body can doubt: and could not God, whose minister he was, have as easily done the same thing at any time, either before or since? can he not do it as easily even now, or at any time hereafter? if he cannot there is an end of his God-

† P. 50.

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head : if he will not, it is want—of what ! mercy and compassion you say ; does then the mercy and compassion of God oblige him not to permit sickness and diseases in the world ? The gentleman pretends to be a Christian, but this is certainly the language of pure atheism.

But to speak clearly to this case ; the true use of miracles is to give evidence of the power of God for some particular ends of his providence : and whatever was the intent of the angel's descending into the water (if he really did descend) this we are sure, that the end of this manifestation of the divine power by the miracles of Jesus was to give the sanction of his authority to the doctrine he was to publish in his name : now though one miracle requires as much power as a hundred, yet a variety of miracles renders the evidence of this power more conspicuous, and the credit of those who should record them to posterity less liable to suspicion, than it would have been if one only had been wrought and recorded ; and this, I presume, may be admitted as a general reason why Jesus wrought many miracles and not  
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one miracle only : but if you should ask, why so many and no more ? or why upon this person and not upon another was this divine power manifested ? these are questions not to be answered, nor is there any sense in requiring or expecting that they should ; because as God is absolutely master of his own gifts, so he best knows when and upon whom to bestow them. To this purpose the words of our Saviour himself (Luke iv. 25.) are pertinent and strong : “ I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land ; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow : and many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisæus the prophet ; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” This was said in answer to his countrymen, who asked him (or were ready enough to ask him) why he did not work miracles among them as well as at Capernaum ? and the sense of the passage is to this effect, viz. “ that they had no right to demand a  
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reason in this case ; for that God would act according to his own sovereign will, and had done so in instances acknowledged by themselves." It is not to be supposed that the gentleman believes these miracles appealed to by our Saviour, any more than he believes those which were wrought by our Saviour himself : but no matter for that ; the answer in all these cases is one and the same, viz. that God may do what he pleases, and is not bound to give us a reason why he does it ; and surely if there are any cases in which it is meet for us to submit to his wisdom, this is one. I wonder the gentleman, when he was considering the resurrection miracles, did not offer this objection, and say that he would not believe that Jesus raised any one from the dead, because he did not raise all : but this reasoning he there disclaims, and confesses that † "two or three instances will be sufficient." But why Jesus was more obliged to heal all the sick than to raise all the dead, it will be proper for him to shew ; and let him shew it when he can.

† Fifth discourse, P. 20.



It appears then, that Jesus's curing that one man only among the multitude, that lay at the pool of Bethesda, is no objection against the credibility of this miracle : and how the angel's curing but one by his descent into the pool is a greater objection against the credibility of that miracle, it will be very hard to shew. The great difficulty lies here ; to what end or purpose did that miracle serve ? this the history does not at all explain, and it may perhaps be no easy matter to determine upon any such grounds : to have recourse to any typical use would avail little with this writer, who, as fond as he seems to be of mystical interpretations, will admit of no types but his own : all I shall say to the matter therefore is this, that there might be a reason for this miracle though we know not what it is.

Upon the whole then, if this passage relating to the angel's descent into the water be an ancient interpolation, as perhaps it may, Mr. W. has been fighting with a shadow, and all his arrows have fallen short of the mark which he aimed at, the credit of Christ or his Evangelist : but if  
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the passage be St. John's own, it is certain we are not answerable for more than St. John has said, and he has barely related the fact (which considered as a miracle can never be proved to be absurd or incredible.) But to what purpose the miracle was intended, or when it began, how often it was repeated, or when it ceased, or why it was confined to one person only, he has not told us; and I know no obligation we are under from our common faith as Christians to answer such questions.

To go on now to the fifth case, which is that of our Saviour's "restoring the blind man to his sight by anointing his eyes with clay, &c." What the gentleman has to object against the miracle in this case has been already seen. What we are now in search after is, circumstances, if any such there are, which affect the credibility of the relation, or which stand as an objection against our admitting the fact to have been as the Evangelist has here represented it. One circumstance then of this sort I meet with, and but one, which is, Jesus's \* "using

\* Fourth discourse, P. 15, 22.



this ointment made of dirt and spittle, which, says the objector, if it had no effect in the cure (as for certain it had none) was a vain and trifling operation, or, as he speaks elsewhere, absurd, senseless, and unaccountable." In this objection, the gentleman must be understood as affirming, that it was senseless and absurd that cases of this sort should be attended with any external action or operation which had not some natural effect in the cure; which is certainly the most senseless thing he could have said. He himself confesses, as you have before seen, that "if Jesus had cured the man only with a word of his mouth, here would have been a great miracle;" and he does not pretend to object any absurdity or incongruity against the relation so circumstantiated: but if an absurdity in using this ointment is to be inferred merely from its insignificancy with respect to the cure, the same absurdity might as reasonably have been objected if our Saviour had only spoke a word; for the speaking of a word no more avails to the cure of blindness, than the use of such an ointment as this can be supposed to do. One would think



think that it were no easy matter for any man to mistake in so clear a case as this. Jesus, in restoring a blind man to his sight, makes use of an ointment which had no natural virtue to cure blindness ; and upon this the gentleman asks, why he used this ointment ? the same Jesus in restoring another blind man to sight, only says, “ receive thy sight ;” which words have no natural virtue to cure blindness neither : and may it not then as reasonably be asked, why he spake them ? in this latter case, I suppose, every body would find a ready answer, and say, that Jesus spake these words to give evidence that a miracle was wrought, and that he was the person who wrought it. A blind man’s coming suddenly to his sight, abstracted from the agency of any person, as foreknowing or foreseeing the event, is either no miracle at all, or if it be a miracle, has not the appearance or evidence of a miracle : but if such an effect follows in consequence of any act or operation performed by any person as declarative of what will happen, this shews both the miracle and the worker. When Jesus said to the blind man, “ receive thy sight ;” he



to digest it : for † “ what did they so throng and press for? was it to see Jesus? —or to hear him preach?—or to behold him working miracles?” I suppose so, Sir ; one, or all these inducements may reasonably enough be presumed to have occasioned this concourse of people ; and if the gentleman is determined to go on in his learned way, in proving by mood and figure that this was not at all worth their while, and that they might have employed themselves better, I shall be very easy with this, till he can likewise shew, that the people of Capernaum were not of a different opinion ; for this matter depends upon their way of thinking, and not upon Mr. W's ; and they did no more in this case, than what the people of any country in the world, would do in a like case. The gentleman is pleased to observe, that “ Jesus, as a prophet, was without honour at Capernaum his own country,” which is his mistake. Capernaum is called his own city, as he had lately chose it for the place of his abode : but his country, that is the

† P. 53, 44.



place of his education, where he had lived from his coming out of Egypt, till his entrance upon his publick ministry, is well known to have been Nazareth. It was of this place that our Saviour spake when he said that "a prophet had no honour in his country;" and of this place likewise that it is said, that "he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief:" but is it credible that Jesus should have been without honour at Capernaum, which had been the scene of some of the most wonderful transactions of his life? or is it incredible, that when he had been absent from them for a while, and but newly returned, the people (who doubtless had likewise heard of his fame abroad) should croud about the house where he was to see and to hear him? it is a shame that we should be put upon asking such questions as these; but the gentleman's head is so full of mysteries, that he forgets the most obvious passages in his Bible, and is a stranger to the most common observations upon human life.

To go on: in consequence of this croud about the door, the history farther says,



that “those who were bringing the sick man to Jesus, could not come nigh him.” How? says the gentleman, || “would not the people make way for the lame, blind, and paralytic, to come to Jesus? was not this frustrating their own hopes and expectations of seeing miracles wrought?” What is this to the purpose? the people he says acted unreasonably: be it so; yet he should not have said, that they acted “more unreasonably than ever mob did, or can be supposed to do;” because there is not a creature, that has ever seen what he calls a mob, that does not know the contrary. Was the gentleman, I wonder, never in Westminster-Hall? if he has, I suppose, he may have observed many crouding up to the bar, and justling out those that have had more business there than themselves; and perhaps too, it may have been found that in some remarkable cases, such tumults have been raised, that one half of those who came to hear the trial, have not been able to understand one word that the judge or witnesses have said.

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Hundreds of instances like this are seen every day, where great throngs of people by their over eagerness, and impatience, have frustrated those hopes and expectations which brought them together—but it is doing too much credit to a mean and trivial objection to answer it seriously ; and therefore to proceed to the only circumstance in this story, which looks any thing strange, their lifting up the sick man to the top of the house, and letting him down through the roof. The first question that the gentleman asks upon this is, \* “ what need was there of such haste, and pains to get to Jesus for a cure ? ” what if there was no need of so much haste ? is the Evangelist not to be believed, because the man did a needless thing ? what shall we make of numberless facts credibly reported by historians if we admit such cavils as these ? but perhaps if the poor man was here to answer for himself, he would say, that he was afraid that before he might find an opportunity of getting in at the door, Jesus might have withdrawn him-

\* P. 55.

self



self privately to another place, which was no unusual thing with him : and if there was any other possible way of coming at him, who will blame the man that he was glad to make use of it ? but † “ the main question is, whether such an enterprize as the Evangelist here speaks of was or could be feasible ? I have no conception, says the gentleman, of the possibility of it : for, adds he, if they could not get into the door of the house for the press, of consequence they could not come at the sides of it ; ” which is just as good reasoning as if he should have said, that if there were people enough abroad to cover five rods of ground, of consequence there were enough to cover three-score. All that can be gathered from the history is, that the door-way and places near adjoining, were very much thronged, which is natural enough in all such cases : but what then ? does it follow from hence, that no part of the house besides was accessible ; or that there was no coming at the sides of it but over the peoples heads ? The gentleman set out with a resolution to

† P. 56.



find impossibilities in this story, or he could never have thought of such consequences as these. I will beg leave then to suppose it very credible, that the sick man might some way or other have been easily conveyed to the walls of the house; and what shall we do with him now? Mr. W. makes a heavy rout about \* “pullies and ropes, and ladders, and hauling and heaving,” as if the poor man had been to be hoisted up to the top of Paul’s; but that such engines as these were at all necessary, he can never prove: whatever else was wanting, hands certainly were not: his bearers were four, and when they came there, I suppose, they might meet at least with half a dozen or half a score more, who, admitting that the house was flat roofed, and not above eight or nine foot high (which are circumstances not at all unlikely) might by the help of any common conveniency easily get him up to the top of it. The gentleman is pleased to say, that it † “is not of much consequence, in this case, of what height the house was:” a mistake in

\* P. 57.

† Ibid.

which,



which, I presume, any common labourer may be able to set him right ; yet he does not care, I find, that it should be thought to have been a very low one : for ancient and modern commentators (to whom he pays the utmost deference when they will serve his purpose) are, it seems, pretty well agreed that it was an upper room where Jesus was ; and consequently the house was at least two stories high. He does not tell us who these commentators are : but whoever they are I am very suspicious that they knew as little of the matter as the gentleman himself : that Jesus had any house of his own, I suppose no commentators have told him ; and whose house this was the history does not say ; but it is very likely that it was the house of Simon and Andrew, who (as we find, Mark i. 29.) had a house in that city whereto Jesus resorted ; and I am not perfectly satisfied that fishermen at that time a day dwelt in houses two stories high. Dr. Lightfoot says, that it \* “ was customary for the pharisees and the doctors of the

\* In loc.



law, when they discoursed of the law or religion to go into the upper chamber ;” and supposes therefore that Jesus was now in an upper chamber sitting with the pharisees, and doctors, who (as St. Luke reports, chap. v. 17.) came out of every town of Galilee, &c. I shall not dispute whether this passage of St. Luke relates to the present story, which perhaps may be justly questioned. What I observe is, that Dr. Lightfoot does not say, nor indeed can it be said, that our Saviour never discoursed with the pharisees and doctors but in an upper chamber ; for the contrary is evident from many places : if there was no upper room in this house, they could not sit in an upper room ; whether there was or not the history is silent ; and consequently, that this house was two stories high cannot be affirmed upon any certain grounds : but what if it was two stories high ? does this gentleman know what conveniency the Jews had to get up to the tops of their houses from without. The very same commentator (whom Mr. W. has lamely quoted) tells us of two ways into a house ; one called the way through  
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the gate, or door ; and the other the way through the roof : and he gives an instance of one that was dead, whom because “ his bier could not be carried out through the door, which was too strait, they let down through the roof, or through the way of the roof : ” and cannot any one of common apprehension as easily conceive how a sick man might be lifted up to the top of the house, as how a dead man might be let down from it ? Let us suppose then the paralytic conveyed to the top of the house, (which he very easily might, for aught that appears to the contrary) what now remains ? why only to get him down into the room ; in which, I hope, there will be no great difficulty. St. Luke says, that they “ let him down through the tiling with his couch. ” St. Mark says, that they “ broke up the roof and let down the bed ; ” which words, whether they are consistent or not consistent with supposing, that they only made the common roof-door a little wider, and let him down through that, it is not worth while to dispute : let us suppose the meaning to be (as the gentleman would have it to be) that “ they made a hole capacious



acious enough for the man and his bed to be let through." Where is the absurdity of this? as to the bed, it need not give him any disturbance: for we are not to suppose, that the beds or couches in those eastern countries (which, as the sacred history shews, a man might carry about him) were things stuffed with feathers like ours: they were probably of the thickness and size of a common carpet; and something of this sort was necessary to let a man down in, who was in no condition to help himself. But for the "tiles and rafters"—why here is the difficulty, and the gentleman makes as much a stir about them, as if the house was going to be pulled down about their ears, and all the company in danger of being knocked on the head: but as to this matter he may be at rest too; of what dimensions the tiles were we cannot tell, they might be very broad and lightly laid on, and possibly the removing half a dozen might do the business: and as to the rafters which supported the covering, let him prove that there was a necessity of removing any of them, which he can never do without shewing  
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(which is impossible) that the space between each timber was not wide enough to receive the body of a man properly disposed : so that the question, so far as the \* possibility of the fact is concerned, is, I hope, now quite at an end : but † “ where was the good man of the house all this while ? says the gentleman in a chafe ; why would he suffer his house to be thus broken up ? ” perhaps he could not help it, Sir ; or perhaps he had so much humanity as to consent that it should be done. Some dam-

\* The possibility of this fact depends entirely upon the manner of building in that country, which was certainly very different from ours. Whoever will consult Lamy de Tabernaculo, lib. II. cap. 6. sect. 2. will find every circumstance that I have supposed in order to solve the difficulties of this story, confirmed by good authority ; as that the Jewish houses had stairs without leading up to the top ; that the roofs of them were not ridged but flat ; that the tiles were large, like our Dutch tiles, and so disposed that they might be removed at pleasure ; all which circumstances being supposed, the difficulty vanishes at once ; which I thought fit to note thus briefly to save the trouble of entering into many particulars. Modern travellers also assure us, that the houses in those parts are at this day low built and flat roofed. See Sandys, p. 36, 149, 160. † Ibid. p. 58.



age there might be ; but if the master of the house was content with it, who else has any right to find fault ?

The gentleman is pleased farther to enquire ; “ whether Jesus could not have made the access to himself more easy ? whether he could not have desired, or even forced the people to make way for this poor man and his bearers ? or whether, to prevent this trouble and damage, he might not have ascended to the house top, and there have spoke the healing word ? ” But it were lost time to stay to give a distinct answer to such mere impertinencies as these ; the plain sense and construction of the whole being in short, neither more nor less than this, that this gentleman pretends to be wiser than God, and thinks that he knows what was proper to be done in this case better than he. So that having now considered Mr. W’s objections, I shall close this discourse with some general observations, which may be proper to be borne in mind, in considering not only these cases, but all other cases of the like sort, which are recorded in the Gospels.

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think that it were no easy matter for any man to mistake in so clear a case as this. Jesus, in restoring a blind man to his sight, makes use of an ointment which had no natural virtue to cure blindness ; and upon this the gentleman asks, why he used this ointment ? the same Jesus in restoring another blind man to sight, only says, “ receive thy sight ;” which words have no natural virtue to cure blindness neither : and may it not then as reasonably be asked, why he spake them ? in this latter case, I suppose, every body would find a ready answer, and say, that Jesus spake these words to give evidence that a miracle was wrought, and that he was the person who wrought it. A blind man’s coming suddenly to his sight, abstracted from the agency of any person, as foreknowing or foreseeing the event, is either no miracle at all, or if it be a miracle, has not the appearance or evidence of a miracle : but if such an effect follows in consequence of any act or operation performed by any person as declarative of what will happen, this shews both the miracle and the worker. When Jesus said to the blind man, “ receive thy sight ;” he



only declared what was to follow ; and this declaration being verified by the event, proved the miracle. If Peter or John had said the same words, and the same effect had followed, the miracle would have been the same, but with this difference, that Peter or John would have been the worker, and not Jesus. May not all this as well be applied to the use of the ointment under consideration ? it was an external action, declarative of our Saviour's intention to cure the man ; and accordingly he was cured : and the action of Jesus was as significant and expressive of what he intended to do, as if he had said in so many words, " receive thy sight : " so that the only remaining question is this, whether of several outward actions equally demonstrative of his divine power, he might not, consistently with reason and good sense, chuse which he had a mind to : a question which I shall leave every man to answer for himself.

The sixth and only remaining case is, that of our Saviour's " curing a man that was sick of the palsy, who, says the history, was borne of four : and when they could



could not come nigh him for the throng, they went up to the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus." This circumstance has given the objector so much uneasiness, that he scarce knows where to end his complaints: but, in short, he tells us, that † "the story of this miracle—is such an accumulation of absurdities, improbabilities, and incredibilities, that a man of the most easy faith, if he at all thinks, cannot digest it." Let us consider the particulars, and see what these absurdities, improbabilities, and incredibilities, are.

The first circumstance that the Evangelist takes notice of is, that "when Jesus was at Capernaum, and it was noised abroad, that he was in the house; many were gathered together, insomuch, that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door." Mark ii. 1, 2. One would hope, that this part of the story at least might appear credible; and yet it seems the gentleman knows not well how

† Ibid. P. 61.



to digest it : for † “ what did they so throng and press for? was it to see Jesus? —or to hear him preach?—or to behold him working miracles?” I suppose so, Sir ; one, or all these inducements may reasonably enough be presumed to have occasioned this concourse of people ; and if the gentleman is determined to go on in his learned way, in proving by mood and figure that this was not at all worth their while, and that they might have employed themselves better, I shall be very easy with this, till he can likewise shew, that the people of Capernaum were not of a different opinion ; for this matter depends upon their way of thinking, and not upon Mr. W's ; and they did no more in this case, than what the people of any country in the world, would do in a like case. The gentleman is pleased to observe, that “ Jesus, as a prophet, was without honour at Capernaum his own country,” which is his mistake. Capernaum is called his own city, as he had lately chose it for the place of his abode : but his country, that is the

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\* P. 55.

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\* P. 57.

† Ibid.

which,



which, I presume, any common labourer may be able to set him right ; yet he does not care, I find, that it should be thought to have been a very low one : for ancient and modern commentators (to whom he pays the utmost deference when they will serve his purpose) are, it seems, pretty well agreed that it was an upper room where Jesus was ; and consequently the house was at least two stories high. He does not tell us who these commentators are : but whoever they are I am very suspicious that they knew as little of the matter as the gentleman himself : that Jesus had any house of his own, I suppose no commentators have told him ; and whose house this was the history does not say ; but it is very likely that it was the house of Simon and Andrew, who (as we find, Mark i. 29.) had a house in that city whereto Jesus resorted ; and I am not perfectly satisfied that fishermen at that time a day dwelt in houses two stories high. Dr. Lightfoot says, that it \* “ was customary for the pharisees and the doctors of the

\* In loc.



law, when they discoursed of the law or religion to go into the upper chamber ;” and supposes therefore that Jesus was now in an upper chamber sitting with the pharisees and doctors, who (as St. Luke reports, chap. v. 17.) came out of every town of Galilee, &c. I shall not dispute whether this passage of St. Luke relates to the present story, which perhaps may be justly questioned. What I observe is, that Dr. Lightfoot does not say, nor indeed can it be said, that our Saviour never discoursed with the pharisees and doctors but in an upper chamber ; for the contrary is evident from many places : if there was no upper room in this house, they could not sit in an upper room ; whether there was or not the history is silent ; and consequently, that this house was two stories high cannot be affirmed upon any certain grounds : but what if it was two stories high ? does this gentleman know what conveniency the Jews had to get up to the tops of their houses from without. The very same commentator (whom Mr. W. has lamely quoted) tells us of two ways into a house ; one called the way through  
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the gate, or door ; and the other the way through the roof : and he gives an instance of one that was dead, whom because “ his bier could not be carried out through the door, which was too strait, they let down through the roof, or through the way of the roof : ” and cannot any one of common apprehension as easily conceive how a sick man might be lifted up to the top of the house, as how a dead man might be let down from it ? Let us suppose then the paralytic conveyed to the top of the house, (which he very easily might, for aught that appears to the contrary) what now remains ? why only to get him down into the room ; in which, I hope, there will be no great difficulty. St. Luke says, that they “ let him down through the tiling with his couch. ” St. Mark says, that they “ broke up the roof and let down the bed ; ” which words, whether they are consistent or not consistent with supposing, that they only made the common roof-door a little wider, and let him down through that, it is not worth while to dispute : let us suppose the meaning to be (as the gentleman would have it to be) that “ they made a hole capacious



acious enough for the man and his bed to be let through." Where is the absurdity of this? as to the bed, it need not give him any disturbance: for we are not to suppose, that the beds or couches in those eastern countries (which, as the sacred history shews, a man might carry about him) were things stuffed with feathers like ours: they were probably of the thickness and size of a common carpet; and something of this sort was necessary to let a man down in, who was in no condition to help himself. But for the "tiles and rafters"—why here is the difficulty, and the gentleman makes as much a stir about them, as if the house was going to be pulled down about their ears, and all the company in danger of being knocked on the head: but as to this matter he may be at rest too; of what dimensions the tiles were we cannot tell, they might be very broad and lightly laid on, and possibly the removing half a dozen might do the business: and as to the rafters which supported the covering, let him prove that there was a necessity of removing any of them, which he can never do without shewing (which



(which is impossible) that the space between each timber was not wide enough to receive the body of a man properly disposed : so that the question, so far as the \* possibility of the fact is concerned, is, I hope, now quite at an end : but † “ where was the good man of the house all this while ? says the gentleman in a chafe ; why would he suffer his house to be thus broken up ? ” perhaps he could not help it, Sir ; or perhaps he had so much humanity as to consent that it should be done. Some dam-

\* The possibility of this fact depends entirely upon the manner of building in that country, which was certainly very different from ours. Whoever will consult Lamy de Tabernaculo, lib. II. cap. 6. sect. 2. will find every circumstance that I have supposed in order to solve the difficulties of this story, confirmed by good authority ; as that the Jewish houses had stairs without leading up to the top ; that the roofs of them were not ridged but flat ; that the tiles were large, like our Dutch tiles, and so disposed that they might be removed at pleasure ; all which circumstances being supposed, the difficulty vanishes at once ; which I thought fit to note thus briefly to save the trouble of entering into many particulars. Modern travellers also assure us, that the houses in those parts are at this day low built and flat roofed. See Sandys, p. 36, 149, 160. † Ibid. p. 58.



age there might be ; but if the master of the house was content with it, who else has any right to find fault ?

The gentleman is pleased farther to enquire ; “ whether Jesus could not have made the access to himself more easy ? whether he could not have desired, or even forced the people to make way for this poor man and his bearers ? or whether, to prevent this trouble and damage, he might not have ascended to the house top, and there have spoke the healing word ? ” But it were lost time to stay to give a distinct answer to such mere impertinencies as these ; the plain sense and construction of the whole being in short, neither more nor less than this, that this gentleman pretends to be wiser than God, and thinks that he knows what was proper to be done in this case better than he. So that having now considered Mr. W’s objections, I shall close this discourse with some general observations, which may be proper to be borne in mind, in considering not only these cases, but all other cases of the like sort, which are recorded in the Gospels.

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It has elsewhere been observed, that there are two points upon which the credit of an historian stands, his knowledge and his integrity. As to the first there is no room to pretend, that the Evangelists had not opportunity to satisfy themselves whether these cures were wrought or not : skill in diseases the apostles had none : nor is it at all necessary to support the credit of their relations, that they should have any : eyes and understanding they certainly had, in virtue of which they were judges, as all men else are, of the common appearances of distempers ; such as madness, blindness, lameness, crookedness, and the like. Some distempers, it is true, may be counterfeited, whereof we have every day a great many examples : and whether the appearances, in any of these cases, were such as could not be counterfeited, it is a very difficult matter to determine : but that in fact they were not counterfeited we have all the reason in the world to say ; for why do men counterfeit diseases ? why generally to serve themselves with a pretence for idleness and begging ; but this could not be the case of any of these persons;



sons; for cheats of this sort are never known to apply themselves to others, as wanting the benefit of a cure. It would not be less absurd to say, that these persons were confederates with Jesus, and counterfeited these distempers to give him a name among the people as a worker of miracles: for besides that no reason can be given why they should have entered into any such confederacy, but a great many to the contrary, it was impossible that they should have succeeded in any such attempt: for no man can be blind, lame, deaf, and the like, for any considerable time, but all who know him must likewise be acquainted with his condition; and therefore had it been pretended by any person that he was born blind, or that he had been some way or other disabled in his limbs, suppose, for ten, twenty or thirty years, and had been cured by Jesus, the cheat must presently have been discovered; for many would have been ready to have borne witness, that they well knew this person, but never understood that he laboured under any such distemper. There is therefore no shew of probability in saying that the apostle



were deceived, or could have been deceived in judging whether these cures were wrought or not : that the persons became sound and whole they saw plainly before their eyes. If they had doubted whether the distempers, which in appearance they had immediately before the supposed cures were wrought, were real or counterfeited, they might easily satisfy themselves in this point by enquiring of the by-standers and relations; and admitting the apostles to have been men of probity and integrity, and that they had any regard upon what grounds they themselves accepted Jesus as the Messiah, it is necessary to suppose that they did so, unless (which is most probable) the general acquiescence and suffrage of the people, who knew the persons and their cases, made such an enquiry needless. If you say that the apostles were not deceived in these cases (which they knew well enough to be cheats) but joined themselves in confederacy with Jesus to carry on an imposture (which is all that is now left to say) this will bring us to the other question concerning the apostles fidelity; and if this could with any reason be called in question,



question, there would be an end of these miracles and of all the rest. But not to repeat those general arguments which have heretofore been offered, to shew that the apostles could have no motive to engage themselves in the cause of Christ, but what arose from the most firm and absolute persuasion of his divine power, evidenced by those miracles of which they were themselves eye-witnesses, let us at present only consider how impracticable it would have been for them, to have carried on such an imposture, supposing that they had attempted it: that the persons upon whom these cures are said to have been wrought could have no confederacy with Jesus has been shewn already, and is farther evident from hence, that whatever reasons there are to suppose a confederacy in these particular cases under consideration, they will as well hold with respect to all the rest; but will you say, that all the persons recorded in the Gospels as cured by our Saviour were in confederacy with him to deceive the rest of the world? where is the sense of it? it is plain from the history, that Jesus performed his cures upon persons of all ranks



and in all places casually as he happened of them in his travels ; and there is hardly an instance to be given of any of them, who can upon any reasonable grounds be presumed to have had any other knowledge of him than what they had received from the common reports of him as a prophet, mighty in word and deed. What room then is there to suppose a confederacy with these persons ? or what notion can any one frame of a plot in which such multitudes, both of men and women in different places, were concerned ? the confederacy then (if there was a confederacy) must needs be confined to Jesus only, and some few of his disciples as actors in it ; and a confederacy it was against the whole Jewish nation, threatening nothing less, in their opinion, than the subversion of their religion, and the total abolition of the law of Moses, to which they were addicted even to superstition ; and what course do they take to carry on the cheat ? why in the very country, where the whole scene of the transaction was to lye, Jesus is extolled as a prophet, and as proving his mission by such cures as were never before heard of, in which



which account the diseases cured, and the manner of the cure, are for the most part specified, as also the places where the persons lived, upon whom these cures were wrought, with many other particular circumstances. For instance, at Jerusalem, at the feast of the Passover, he cures a man that had been lame eight and thirty years, by bidding him arise and walk. In Galilee, in one of their synagogues on the Sabbath-day, he restores a man that had a withered hand, by bidding him stretch it forth. At Capernaum he heals a Centurion's servant, who was sick of the palsy, only by speaking a word ; and cures a nobleman's son of a fever. At Bethsaida he restores a blind-man to his sight, &c. These and abundance more such instances are reported of him ; in consequence of which, Jesus and his disciples gain credit every day among the people, who come over in great numbers to their party, and yet, it seems not one word of these reports was true ! It is to no purpose to distinguish here and say, that some of them might be true : for if you can believe one, you may as well believe the rest ; and if one was a cheat, they were



all cheats. But can any one believe this? Suppose that some body at this time a day should pretend a commission from God, to set up a new religion in opposition to Christianity, and to countenance his pretensions, should say, that at London he cured an alderman's son of fits: At St. Alban's, a gentleman's servant of a broken leg: At Dover, restored a blind man to his sight, and so on. Is it possible that such a pretender as this should gain credit? would not every mortal think himself concerned to make strict examination, whether these reports were true or not? would not the people in every place, to which appeal was made, testify that no such things were ever seen or heard of among them? and would not the impostor, instead of gaining proselytes, be exposed and grow contemptible in the eyes of the people? The gentleman with whom I am now concerned, has been pleased to take notice of the extreme tenderness and sensibility of the clergy, when any attempt is made upon religion; this I hope is no fault; all men are, or ought to be, tender of their religion; and as easy a matter as he thinks it to be to gain the reputation



tion of a wonder-worker, should he make the experiment upon his countrymen in favour of his new mystical sect, he would soon find his mistake. I can readily enough apprehend, how easy it is to impose upon the vulgar in many cases ; and that men of craft and artifice may make the world believe strange things of them, where mankind is not enough interested in the affair, to make it worth the while to take pains in examining into the bottom of their pretensions ; but that in a matter of the last importance, where the appeals to publick facts were so frequent, and the subject of these appeals was of such a sort as all mankind were capable to judge of, a cheat should successfully have been carried on, with me surpasse all reasonable apprehension.

I have given you, in a few words, the evidence, by which this part of the gospel-history is supported ; and whether the objections produced by Mr. W. are sufficient to out-weigh it, let any reasonable person judge. There is one general mistake, upon which the gentleman sets out and perpetually dwells, in considering these cases : It  
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is this ; That \* “ if our Saviour had intended that any rational argument for his divine authority — should be urged from his Miraculous Healing Power, the diseases which he cured would have been accurately described, and his manner of operation so cautiously expressed, that we might have been sure the work was supernatural, and out of the power of art and nature to perform :” but on the contrary, he tells us, that “ the best and the greatest miracles of Jesus — are so blindly and lamely and imperfectly reported, as that by reasonings upon the letter of the stories of them, they may be dwindled away, and reduced to no wonders.” As to the manner in which these cures were wrought, it is impossible that there can be any exception against it : all that Jesus ever did in these cases was to speak a word, or to lay his hands upon the diseased, or to use some outward application, evidently of no significancy, in any other sense than as it was intended to give evidence of his power, upon which the cure instantly and immediately followed:

\* *Second Discourse*, p. 4, 5.



now if diseases, real diseases, were cured in such a manner as this, it will be the greatest absurdity in the world to question, whether “the operation was supernatural, and out of the power of art and nature to perform.” Art here is none, and nature affords no such instances as these. The only point then is whether the diseases were real; and this it seems we cannot know “unless those diseases had been accurately described.” You see now upon what terms this gentleman would have been willing to accept the Gospel: I have shewn you before, in treating upon the Resurrection Miracles, that what he expected was that the Evangelists should have given us the history of the lives of all persons on whom Jesus wrought a cure; now it seems this is not sufficient, unless, with the history of their lives, we had likewise a history of their diseases, and the New Testament had contained as great a variety of cases as the books of Hippocrates! what sense there is in this, let all mankind judge. Lay down but this one principle that the Evangelists were persons of credit, and you need nothing more; what if they were not exactly

actly



actly skilled in symptoms and signs? does not every countryman know when his neighbour is lame, or blind, or mad, or has the dropfy? and even in secret diseases, is not there a way of coming at a satisfactory knowledge of them either by the relation of the persons themselves, or of those about them? there can be no question, but that the Evangelists had recourse to all these methods so far as they were needful: what occasion then could there be for any such accurate description of diseases as this gentleman calls for? it is enough that THEY had the common evidences in such cases that the distempers were real; and to say that we will not believe them upon their testimony, is to give up the Gospel all at once upon the most weak and absurd of all principles, viz. that it is unreasonable to admit any thing as truth, of which we are not witnesses ourselves. It is this, I fear, that lies at the bottom of all this gentleman's cavils at our Saviour's cures. He tells us, that \* “ if the Evangelists had told us of men, that wanted one or both their legs

\* *ibid.*



—and how Jesus commanded nature to extend itself, to the entire reparation of such defects, here would have been stupendous miracles indeed, which no scepticism or infidelity could have cavilled at." If he means that he would have been convinced by such a report, I much question the truth of what he says ; there is, as he observes, "no such miracle recorded" in the Gospel; but we can shew him greater things ; instances we have of dead men raised to life again, and yet scepticism and infidelity can cavil at these, notwithstanding the common evidences of death have been set forth beyond all reasonable exception : the gentleman it seems understands what it is to want a leg ; and does he not as well understand what it is to be dead? yes ; but he denies that any such thing was done as raising the dead to life ; and might he not as easily deny any other fact? what credit then could the Gospel have gained with him, from the most minute and circumstantial description of diseases that could have been given ? So that the matter at last must rest here ; either the Evangelists are credible witnesses, or they are not ; If you  
confess



confess that they are, you have all you want ; and the most indistinct accounts of cures wrought by our Saviour, may be admitted as evidences for the truth of the Gospel ; but if you will hold it out against sense and reason, that they are not credible witnesses, all accounts, whether distinct or indistinct, are alike, and this is a degree of infidelity for which there is no remedy.

And now I have done with this point, and likewise with that part of the controversy which concerns the credibility of the Scripture history. There are yet four or five miracles excepted against by this gentleman which I have not considered, but concerning these I have little to add to what has been already observed by other writers.

A N



A N  
EXAMINATION

O F  
Mr. *WARBURTON*'s  
SECOND PROPOSITION,

In his projected Demonstration of  
The divine Legation of Moses.



MONS PARTURIBAT, GEMITUS IMMANESCIENS:  
ERATQUE IN TERRIS MAXIMA EXPECTATIO.  
AT ILLE MUREM PEPERIT. HOC SCRIPTUM EST  
TIBI,  
QUI MAGNA QUUM MINARIS, EXTRICAS NIHIL.

PHÆDRUS.



A N  
EXAMINATION  
O F  
Mr. *W A R B U R T O N*'s  
SECOND PROPOSITION,

In his projected Demonstration of  
**The divine Legation of Moses.**

In which the Faith of the ancient Jewish  
Church, touching the Doctrine of a  
Future State, is asserted and cleared from  
the Author's Objections.

In an Epistolary Dissertation addressed to  
the A U T H O R.

To which is added,

An A P P E N D I X.

Containing CONSIDERATIONS on the Command  
to Abraham, to offer up his Son Isaac.

Published in the Year MDCCXLIV.



EXAMINATION

OF

MR. WARBURTON'S

SECOND PROPOSITION,

In his projected Dissertation of

N. B. *The Quotations in this Work  
are according to the first Edition  
of Mr. Warburton's Book, unless  
where the second is particularly  
mentioned.*

In an Epistolary Dissertation addressed to  
the AUTHOR.

To which is added,

An APPENDIX

Containing Considerations on the Command  
to Abraham, to offer up his Son Isaac.

Published in the Year MDCCXIV.



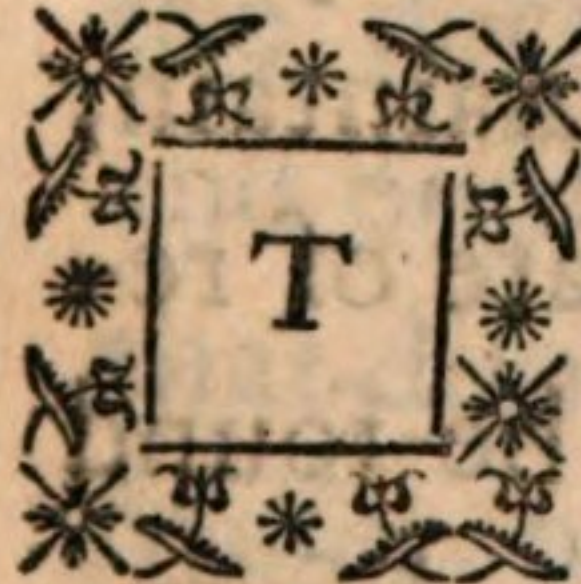


A N  
E X A M I N A T I O N  
O F  
Mr. *W A R B U R T O N*'s  
S E C O N D P R O P O S I T I O N,

In his projected Demonstration of  
The divine Legation of Moses.



S I R,

 H E publick has a good while  
been held in suspence, upon your  
project of a new demonstration of  
the divine legation of Moses, as  
a foundation for a general defence of the  
Christian Religion. Part of this work on-  
ly, has as yet been published ; in which,  
that you have given great proofs of your  
learning and ingenuity, I shall not dispute ;  
and you have had a very fair time allowed  
you to receive the compliments of the pub-  
lick on that score. It may now be season-



sonable to call you to something, which, though perhaps less agreeable to you, may yet be more profitable, and that is to consider how much Truth you have advanced, and what real service you have done, or are likely to do, to religion by this undertaking. In your first volume you advanced no farther than to shew, that the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments is necessary to the support of civil government; and accordingly, that the ancient heathen legislators inculcated it, though many of them believed nothing of it themselves. This part of your work is fallen into other hands, and there I am willing to leave it. Your second volume, which finishes your minor proposition, undertakes to maintain, “That the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is not to be found in, nor did make part of the Mosaic dispensation;” and from hence it seems the conclusion is to arise, that “therefore the law of Moses is of divine original.”

As your conclusion is to be the subject of a future book, I think I have no right to meddle with it at present; I would prejudge you in nothing; and shall therefore  
leave



leave you at full liberty to connect it with your premises, as you shall find yourself able. But your minor proposition having received all the perfection you intend to give it, I may be allowed, I hope, the liberty of a few words upon that subject; which I offer, not with intention to disparage any thing that has been well said, but, to make you sensible of the difficulty of your question (of which at present you seem to feel nothing) that being forewarned, you may the better know where to lay your guards, in the farther prosecution of this important argument.

Your proposition singly taken might be understood to carry this meaning, viz. That the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, is no Constituent Part of that dispensation which was introduced by Moses; nor taught by him as Properly Appertaining to his law. In this there would be nothing but what is right. But in your defence and explanation of your proposition you go a great deal farther; and say in effect, that Moses hath not avowed the doctrine of a future state; hath not borne public Testimony to it; which is certainly a very differ-



ent thing. If a person goes as ambassador into a foreign country, his embassy may be concerning a matter of peace or war, or any thing else you will suppose: but he may report what he pleases of the manners and customs of the country from whence he comes, for the entertainment or the instruction of those with whom he converses, without exceeding the bounds of his commission. In like manner Moses, though the declaring the doctrine of a future state was not the subject matter of his Mission, yet, might report what had otherwise come to his knowledge concerning it; and give such notices and intimations to the people of the Jews, as would shew them that it was a doctrine fit to be believed. But has he done this? You deny it: for you tell us, p. 446, that “future rewards and punishments, as they were not the sanction of the Mosaic dispensation, so they were not taught in it at all, and that, in consequence of the omission, the people had not this doctrine for many ages.” Again, p. 462, that “the Israelites, from the time of Moses to the time of their captivity, had not the doctrine of a future state” — Again; p. 465, that “there was no Popular Expectation of  
a fu-



a future state," among the Jews. And again p. 468, that "the people were so far from being influenced by it, that they had no idea of it." Had Moses given any notices or intimations of the doctrine of a future state by which the people might have understood that it was a doctrine fit to be believed, it is not to be presumed that they could have been so ignorant of it as you here represent them. — But your very words carry it that no such notices or intimations were given by Moses. For if Moses as an authorized teacher had declared the doctrine of a future state, or (which is the same thing) had the declaring this doctrine entered into the subject of his Mission, a future state would then have been the sanction of that dispensation; and therefore in denying that future rewards and punishments were the sanctions of that dispensation, you must be understood as denying that Moses delivered this doctrine as an authorized teacher. When therefore above and besides this you add, that this doctrine was not taught At All in that dispensation, you must mean something more, and that can be no other than this, that Moses gave no sort of notices or intimations concerning a future state. It is



more remarkable yet, and will fix this point beyond all contradiction, that you represent Moses in this case as acting with design and caution : for speaking of the Egyptians, the fundamental maxim of whose religious policy, you tell us, was to propagate by every kind of method the doctrine of a future state, as the necessary support of all religion and government, you add : “ Here again our law-giver Intentionally rejects a support really beneficial to mankind — entirely omits to mention it in his institutes of law and religion, and is studiously silent in all those principles that lead to the propagation of it.” p. 346. And p. 449, you undertake to prove, that “ the omission of the doctrine of a future state was not accidental, or of a thing Moses did not well understand, but that on the contrary it was a designed omission, and of a thing well known by him to be of high importance to society.” I do not see a reason, Sir, why you mention it as a matter of choice in Moses, that he did not enter the doctrine of a future state in his institutes of law : if it had been in his institutes it must have been in his commission too, in which it is agreed,



agreed, it had no place. But thus much is very plain ; that these passages represent Moses as industriously concealing, what other nations industriously propagated, the doctrine of a future state, and (as you now add) every principle that leads to the propagation of it. And it is remarkable what you say, p. 559. viz. that “ temporal good and evil were not only proposed but actually dispensed to the Jews — to Confine them to the literal sense of their sanction, and Stop them from looking any farther.” And p. 468, that Moses was, “ so far from teaching the doctrine of a future state, that he studiously contrived to keep it out of sight.” Taking then your proposition with these explanations, the whole doctrine contained under it will comprehend these three points, viz.

1. That the doctrine of a future state is no Constituent part of the institution of Moses, or that the declaring and publishing that doctrine was no part of his Commission.

2. That Moses not only had no authority to teach this doctrine, but moreover that he gave no such notices or intimations  
of



of it to the people, whereby they might know and understand that it was a doctrine fit to be believed ; but on the other hand, Designedly and Industriously Concealed it from them, as also every principle that leads to the belief of it, on Purpose that they might Not know or believe any thing concerning it.

3. That in consequence of this conduct the people of the Jews were utterly ignorant of this doctrine, both in the days of Moses, and afterwards till the time of their captivity.

To the first of these positions, as I said before, I have no exception : but the two last I must dispute with you.

And in the first place I observe, that your hypothesis carries a manifest contradiction to your own principles. You tell us, that the Egyptians propagated the doctrine of a future state as the Necessary Support of all Religion and Government : and that you deliver this as your own sense of this doctrine, and not the sense of the Egyptians only, is most evident : for as to the necessity of this doctrine to support government, it is the whole work of your first  
volume



volume to prove it ; and that it is necessary also to support religion, appears from your dedication addressed to the Jews ; where you have these words. “ I have shewn that the law of Moses revealed no future state of rewards and punishments, but studiously declined the mention of any doctrine preparatory to it ; that no Mosaiical tradition supplied this omission ; but that it became a national doctrine among you only in the latter ages of your republic.—But it is very certain that That religion must want much of absolute perfection, which wants a doctrine so essential to religion,” p. 23. How is it possible, Sir, that the belief of the doctrine of a future state should be essential to religion and government, and yet be wanting under the Jewish dispensation ? was it, could it be, the intention of providence that the Jews should have neither religion or government ? to give you all the liberty I can, I will suppose, that when you say, that the doctrine of a future state is essential, &c. your meaning is, that it is a necessary aid, Unless provision be otherwise made ; for it is in this light you have placed the Jewish  
re-



republic ; they had not the doctrine of a future state, but there was an Equal Providence administered among them, by which you say, (p. 452.) “ Human affairs might be kept in good order.” Here then is a provision for Government ; though by the way, Sir, even this equal providence without the doctrine of a future state, was, in your own account, so bad a security, that God found it necessary to make a law on purpose to supply the deficiency : the law you mention, is that law by which God declares that he will *visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, &c.* which you say (p. 452.) was “ a provision purposely made to oppose to the Hurtful consequences of the omission of the doctrine of a future state.” But why an expedient, Sir, when the natural remedy was at hand ? you have told us that there were wise reasons of providence for this ; and when you have told us what those wise reasons are, it will be time enough to enter farther with you into this subject. For the present I ask, was this equal providence a proper security for Religion ? if it was, why do you yet charge the Jews with the want of an essential doctrine



trine in their religion? If you should say, that your argument is levelled against the Jews considered only in their present state, in which they are not under an equal providence, this answer will not serve you: for as the Jews in their present state are not under an equal providence, so neither do they want the doctrine of a future state, of which you tell us they have been in possession long ago: but your objection supposes the doctrine of a future state wanting; and therefore must needs relate not to Judaism as in its present state, but as under its ancient original constitution, as left by Moses: and the consequence will be, whether you will or not, not barely that the Jewish religion wanted much of absolute perfection, but, absolutely, that it was no religion at all, but a mere political institution: for certainly the want of what is essential destroys, not only the perfection of any thing, but the very being of it.

I acknowledge, Sir, that in another part of your work you give a very different account of this matter; and I shall take notice of it at a more convenient time. Let us now attend to the points in debate; which



which if you have made good, Consequences, be they what they will, must be submitted to.

Your 5th section, book V. opens the case thus ;

“ Having prepared the ground, and laid the foundation, I go on to shew that future rewards and punishments, which were not the sanction of the Mosaic dispensation, were not taught in it at all.” *i. e.* as I have just now shewn you must mean, that Moses gave no Notices or Intimations concerning a future state. This is the point to be proved. But is there one word offered to prove this? not a syllable ; but only, as you yourself have summed up the amount of your evidence, that, in the “ Mosaic Institutes there is no mention or intelligible hint of the rewards and punishments of another life ;” or in other words, that “ a future state of rewards and punishments Makes No Part of the Mosaic dispensation ; which is quite another thing.” Having thus, by confounding the question, avoided, instead of proving, the first point, you go on to the second, which is, “ That the omission of a future state of rewards and punishments was a studied



died omission ;” this you undertake to prove from several circumstances in the book of Genesis. — The circumstances are these.

“ 1. In the history of the fall it is to be observed, that Moses mentions only the instrument of the agent, the serpent, not the agent himself, the devil : and the reason is plain ; there was a close connection between that agency, the spiritual effects of the fall, the work of redemption, and the doctrine of a future state : what but This could be the cause of the omission ? when it is so evident that the knowledge of this grand enemy of our welfare would have been the likeliest cure of idolatry, as teaching men to esteem it a mere diabolical illusion —

“ 2. In his history of Enoch’s translation to heaven, there is so studied an obscurity that several of the Rabbins—interpret this as only signifying an immature death. *And Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him.* How unlike the scripture relation of the same case in Elijah ! *And it came to pass when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha to Gilgal, &c. And*  
it



*it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.* But the reason is clear : when this latter history was written, it was thought fit to lay a preparation for the dawning of a future state of reward and punishment, which in the time of Moses had been highly inconvenient —

“ 3. In his history of the Patriarchs he entirely omits, or throws into the darkest shades, the accounts of those revelations, which, we learn from the writers of the New Testament, some of them were actually favoured with concerning the redemption of mankind. — From whence therefore could all this studious caution arise ? but to keep out of sight that doctrine, which, for ends truly worthy of the divine wisdom, he had omitted in his institutions of law and religion.”

Now, Sir, you speak to the point : for these observations relate, not to the Constitution of the law, but, to the Knowledge of the people, from whom you attempt to prove that Moses did use Caution and Industry



try to hide the doctrine of a future state : but surely, till now, there never was a point of so much weight, and introduced with so much form and solemnity, that was ever left to rest upon such evidence. The whole amount is this, and no more than this ; that you can see no reason why Moses should have mentioned the serpent and not the devil—why he should not have said as plainly, that Enoch was translated, as that Elijah was—or why the doctrine of the redemption should not have been delivered in the Old Testament in clearer and more express terms, unless it were that he intended to hide the doctrine of a future state from the people. Very well, Sir ; and suppose that nobody else could see a reason for these things, shall it therefore pass for Demonstration that there could be no other reason than what you are pleased to assign ? I shall not trouble you with any of my conjectures upon these cases, nor is it at all needful : for let me observe to you, that the governing question of all is this—Is it true in fact that the people of the Jews were so ignorant of the doctrine of a future state as you pretend ? This is the grand point ;

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point ; to which the others are but subordinate, as you confess yourself, p. 461. where you say that your proof of those other points “is only for the sake of this consequence, that Therefore the people had not the knowledge of that doctrine.” If then it can be made appear with any degree of probability, that the people of Israel had this doctrine, before, at, and after the time of Moses, your hypothesis will be overthrown, and all these curious speculations will fall of course. This is what I shall now attempt, by collecting the Scripture evidence in the natural order in which it arises, and clearing it as I go along from the objections you have raised against it.

I observe then ;

1. That Moses has by plain and necessary implication recorded this doctrine as the ancient faith, in those words of the patriarch Jacob, Gen. xlvii. 9. *The days of the years of my PILGRIMAGE are an hundred and thirty years ; few and evil have the days of my life been, and have not attained to the years of the life of my fathers in the days of THEIR PILGRIMAGE.* If you would admit the common interpretation of this passage, which



which supposes that the life of man is here stiled a pilgrimage in reference to the life to come; it will amount, I say, by necessary implication to an evidence, that the patriarchs believed the doctrine of a future state: nay, more than this, it will prove it to have been the common belief, not only among the people of God, but among other nations; for the familiarity with which the patriarch hath expressed himself, shews it to have been the language of the times, well understood by Pharaoh; and you can have no better evidence to shew what were or are common opinions in any age, than common sayings are. Moses therefore in declaring what was the ancient faith must be understood as declaring his own faith, and as intimating to the Jews in the strongest manner what their faith ought to be. You was well aware of this consequence, and to avoid it have told us, that it “can never be allowed, that these words in their literal and most obvious meaning express any such thing.” p. 562. But why? the reason follows, “Pharaoh is here questioning the patriarch not about human life in general, but his own: therefore, to



make the reply pertinent, Jacob must be understood as meaning by his pilgrimage the unsettled way of life among his family, living in tents, and removing from place to place." It is granted, Sir, that Pharaoh was questioning the patriarch about his own life, not about human life in general; the question was, *how old art thou?* but that it should be so Pertinent in the old man, in his answer, to mention a circumstance of his life trivial to Pharaoh, his dwelling in tents; so Impertinent whilst he was complaining of the shortness of his days, to express the common hopes of a life to come, is a point which yet wants explanation. Pharaoh wanted to know his age; but he did not want to know the circumstances of his family, whether they dwelt in tents, or whether they had any settled habitation; and I presume, Sir, that should you ask any aged person in your neighbourhood the same question, and should receive the like answer, you would not think he deserved your contempt. You should have observed farther, Sir, that the patriarch speaks not of his own life only, as a pilgrimage, but re-  
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presents the lives of his fathers under the same image; for he says he had not *attained to the years of the life of his fathers in the days of their pilgrimage*. Some of his fathers dwelt in tents, but all of them did not; and yet it seems they were All pilgrims, for so he speaks of them without difference or distinction. If this will not satisfy, there is greater authority yet at hand, to justify the common interpretation; I mean the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, who takes notice of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their dwelling in tabernacles, and yet interprets this passage as referring, not to their unsettled way of living in this world, but to their hopes in the next. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth: for they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country, Heb. xi. 13, 14.* What country? not an earthly country: for as the apostle proceeds, vers. 15. *had they been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*



Other country to seek there was none ; for the land of Canaan in which they were now sojourners, was not granted to them for a possession, but to their posterity some hundred of years after : therefore it was a heavenly country, as the next verse concludes—*but now they desire a better country that is a heavenly.* What now do you say? why, you tell us roundly, that “the sense which the sacred writer puts on these words is the Spiritual sense.” A mere shuffle ! and as flat a contradiction to the apostle’s as is possible : He argues from the natural construction of the passage, as it lies in the Old Testament, and tells us that these words (*ἐμπαύριζον*) make manifest, or plainly declare, that the patriarchs looked for a future state ; You tell us, that the sense which the apostle puts upon these words is Not the literal and obvious, but the spiritual (i. e. hidden) meaning ! I shall leave this matter, Sir, to your farther consideration ; and when you are considering it, I desire you will give us your thoughts of these words of the psalmist : *I am a STRANGER with thee, and a SOJOURNER as all my fathers were.* Psal. xxxix. 12. And again : *I am a*  
STRANGER



STRANGER ON THE EARTH; *hide not thy commandments from me.* Psal. cxix, 19. One can hardly doubt but that the psalmist borrowed these expressions from the patriarch's confession; and if his intention hereby was to signify his expectation of a future state (which I as little question) it will be an evidence in what sense the ancient Jews understood the passage under debate. You perhaps may find out new meanings, as, to do you justice, you are always ready at expedients, when difficulties of any kind stand in your way: but I hope we shall not be told that David and all his forefathers were Dwellers in Tents.

2. Notwithstanding your objection from the studied obscurity of the history of Enoch's translation, I shall venture to set it down as an eminent example of the visible execution of God's providence in respect of a future state. *And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.* Gen. v. 24. "How unlike (say you) the Scripture relation of the same case in Elijah!"—Your reasonings upon these cases have already been set down at large; and I am afraid, that your intelligent readers



from this and many such curiosities as are to be met with in your book, will be apt to conclude, that you are troubled with that spirit which you complain has corrupted others, “the unclean spirit of Refinement\*.”

Moses has not said so plainly of Enoch that he was translated, as it is said of Elijah, in the book of Kings, that he was carried by a whirlwind into heaven : what then ? why therefore, Moses purposely designed to hide it ; but if this is the case, I desire to know by what new light the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus could say many hundreds of years after Moses wrote his history, that *Enoch pleased the Lord, and was translated, being an example of repentance to all generations?* Ecclus. xliv. 16.

Was the author of this book taught it by inspiration ? or did any prophet or inspired person in after times write a commentary upon this portion of sacred history, to shew that Moses meant that Enoch was translated ? if neither of these can be proved, or will be insisted upon, I suppose it may be admitted as probable at least, that there

\* P. 558.



was an ancient, current tradition among the Jews, founded upon this very history, that Enoch did not die, but was taken up alive into heaven ; and consequently, that this (whatever some Rabbins may have been pleased to write) was the true intended sense of the words, and so understood to be from the very time in which the history of Moses was written. If you still ask ; why then did not Moses speak as plainly in this case, as the author of the book of Kings did in the case of Elijah ? my answer will be very short.—I am not concerned to give satisfaction to such questions, and surely there is as little sense in asking them : possibly the memory of so remarkable a case, that had happened but once, had been so well preserved in Moses's time, that a very general account was enough to make the meaning of the historian understood. You indeed will have the reason of the difference to be, that “when this latter history was written, it was thought fit to lay a preparation for the dawning of a future state, which in the time of Moses had been highly inconvenient.” But have you told us what this inconvenience is, or  
have



have you proved it ? neither of these: You tell us indeed in general terms, that to suppose the doctrine of a future state known under the Mosaic dispensation, “ destroys all true conception of that divine harmony which inspires each part, and reigns throughout the whole of God’s grand Dispensation to mankind.” p. 478. But what are we the wiser for all this ? Or what do you know of God’s grand dispensation, or the harmony of it, farther than what is revealed ? Can you prove then from scripture, that a general knowledge of a future state would have been inconvenient in the days of Moses ? if you can, do it ; and it will be to the purpose ; but to sit down and fancy to yourself an order or harmony in the openings of God’s will to mankind, and then make it a Rule of Interpretation, is surely very preposterous and absurd !

But though you will not admit that this passage is clear for the Translation of Enoch, I perceive you will accept it as an evidence for the separate Existence of the Soul, and that so plain as to be beyond all possibility of mistake. For you tell us, that “ Moses being necessitated to mention Enoch’s translation ;



flation, it could not But be, that a separate existence [of the Soul] might be inferred how obscurely soever the story was delivered." p. 481. I am apprehensive, Sir, that if your Rabbinical interpretation of this passage (which by your way of introducing it, you seem to think does not want plausibility) be admitted, it will as little prove the one as the other. Be this as it will, you here allow that Moses has born testimony in a manner not to be excepted against, that the soul lives when the body is dead : and may I have your permission to conclude from hence, that therefore he hath born testimony to the doctrine of a future state? why no, it seems ; not in any sense that will serve my purpose : for you allow that the Jews believed that " the soul survived the body;—*i.e.*, simply concluded that it returned to him who gave it; but any Interesting speculation concerning its state of separation (you say) they had none." p. 474. Your reasons for this shall be considered hereafter : I shall only observe at present, that the mention of Enoch's walking with God, being so closely connected in the history with his being translated, it shews as plainly



plainly as it shews any thing else, that he was taken to his reward. So the Author of Ecclesiasticus understood it, in the place above cited, where he sets forth Enoch as *as Example of repentance to all generations ; i. e.* an example of that reward which repentance procures, or entitles us to. So the author to the Hebrews, \* *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death—for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God ;* which manifestly implies that his translation was the fruit, that is, the reward of his piety ; which the next verse more strongly supports ; *Without faith it is impossible to please God ; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is—a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* In a few words, what the people of the Jews might infer from this piece of history, is, that good men are dear to God, and will be rewarded by him when they shall be taken away from this world ; and this, no doubt, was what Moses intended they should learn from it. You tell us that Moses was necessitated to mention Enoch's  
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\* Chap. xi. Vers. 5.



translation ; but as no part of the history has any dependance upon this case, I am persuaded you will find no other reason why he was necessitated to mention it than this, that it was a proper example to all generations, to encourage them to virtue and piety, by the hopes of a future recompence.

But whether this which I have offered be evidence or not, that the doctrine of a future state was the ancient faith, You, it seems, have evidence somewhere, that the Patriarchs at least did believe it : for you have confessed that they did, more than once. I will mention only one passage, p. 472. “ Life and immortality was revealed by God as a special favour to the patriarchs and prophets, but kept hid from the body of the Jewish nation.” If one should ask you how you know that the Patriarchs believed a future state ; you have told us your authority ; you have it from the New Testament ; and thither indeed you must go ; for that there is any Evidence of it to be had from the Old, your hypothesis obliges you to deny. This authority is enough for me, but it will not serve the Deists. The like may be said as to Moses’  
Belief



Belief, if they should think it to their purpose to call it in question. — But to leave the Deists to themselves. If the patriarchs did believe the doctrine of a future state, which I as little doubt as you ; a question will very naturally arise — How came the ancient fathers by this faith ? the resolution of which will bring us nearer to the bottom of this argument.

To the question I have nothing certain to offer but this, that from Adam down to Moses, there was a Covenant subsisting, by which a seed was held forth that should *bruise the serpent's head*, and in whom all *the nations of the earth should be blessed*. Christian Divines have interpreted this covenant (which Moses has recorded, and carried down through the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) as containing a promise of the deliverance of mankind from the curse denounced upon the fall ; and with great reason ; for it is so interpreted by St. Paul, Gal. iii. 8. where he says, *the Scripture — preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed*. How had Abraham the Gospel preached to him, in this promise, unless this  
promise



promise contains the hope of the Gospel? I am so happy as to have you consenting in this : for you tell us, p. 604, 605. that the promise made to Abraham that “ *in him all the families of the earth should be blessed*, is the mystic, fundamental promise of the redemption of mankind by the Messiah.” Mystic or not mystic, is not to the purpose at present ; that this promise contains the promise of the redemption, you confess ; if of the redemption, then of a future state, without which the redemption is not to be understood ; now if the covenant made with Abraham contained the hope of a future state, (as it must if it contains the hope of the gospel) it will follow, that the covenant made with Adam and Noah contained the same hope ; for all these are but one and the self same covenant under different limitations.

What distinct notions the fathers had of the redemption promised in this covenant, I do not know : that they understood ALL of it that Christ hath since revealed, does not seem to me credible, nor am I bound to affirm it ; but I say, with a very learned writer of our church, that it is absolutely  
necessary



necessary to be supposed, that so much hope was to be communicated, and was communicated to them by these promises, “as might be a rational foundation for their future endeavours to reconcile themselves to God by a better obedience.”\* And could that hope be less than this, that they should find that reward for their virtues in another life, which by the earliest experience they had learned, they were not to look for in this? you seem to be of opinion, that the patriarchs had this hope, not merely from these promises as recorded by Moses, but from some private revelations not recorded; which may be truth for ought I can tell; but which way soever they came by this knowledge, the question will be, whether, since it is allowed that they had it, this is not a very fair and natural presumption, that it was the Common Belief of the people of God in those times? this you constantly deny; and will have it, that the knowledge of a future state was communicated to the patriarchs as a Special Favour to be kept secret from the rest of mankind. But upon what

\* Bp. of Sarum's Use and Intent of Prophecy, p. 69.



what foot then, could religion be maintained in the old world? What the effect of the fall was we know; Man was doomed to return to his dust after a short and troublesome life: no encouragement surely in such a prospect as this! and yet encouragement of one kind or another there must have been; we serve neither Man nor God for nought. The apostle tells us, Heb. xi. 6. *that he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*: which implies that to serve God whilst we have no prospect of a reward from him, is as unreasonable to be expected, as it would be to serve him if we had no belief of his existence. That there was religion in the old world we are certain; Sacrifices were the public profession of it; and Enoch and Noah are recorded to us as great and eminent examples of piety: to support a common religion there must have been some common hope; and what was this hope? exemption from death it could not be; God had given very early proof of his resolution to execute that part of the curse in the death of Abel, the first righteous man

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that



that was ever born: nor could it be exemption from the calamities of life; which, as the words of Lamech upon the birth of Noah very plainly shew, lay alike upon the good and the bad. *This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.* Gen. v. 29. If it be said that these words shew Lamech's hope, that God would remove the curse denounced upon the earth, and that this might also have been the general hope of mankind, it may be admitted; but this hope could not be the foundation of the common religion, because it contained nothing peculiar to good men; whilst the curse was upon the earth it lay alike upon good and bad men without distinction; and when it was to be removed, the good and bad alike would be sharers in the benefit; but the hope which supports religion must be a hope peculiar to the good, as distinguished from the bad; and what could this hope be, but that this state, in which they could have no such hope, was not to be their last, and that if they had not their reward in this world, they should have it in another? Abel it is  
certain



certain had not his reward in this world. He pleased God, but he displeased his wicked brother, who thereupon flew him; which would have been a very bad example to the age in which he lived, if the common notion had been, that death which ends all our hopes here, leaves us nothing to hope for hereafter. Go down to the times of Abraham, and the case will very little differ. Here indeed was a temporal covenant given: but who were to have the advantage of it? why not Abraham himself, but his posterity, at the distance of some hundreds of years: but what was this to Him or to the Then generation? Abraham at God's call left his kindred and his father's house, with no hopes of settling in a better county, but to be a sojourner all his days, and that in no very comfortable way of living. This was his virtue. And was it think you a sufficient, was it a proper recompence for this and all other acts of heroic piety which are recorded in his history, that not He but his distant posterity should be the better for it? It will not help you to say, that Abraham and the heads of families had the knowledge of a future



state communicated to them, unless you confess withal, that their religion was grounded upon this hope; but if you allow this, why do you confine this knowledge to the Heads of families? I hope it is not your opinion that the heads of families only were to have religion: the scripture mentions it as the reason of God's great kindness to Abraham, that he would *command his Children and his Household to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.* Gen. xviii, 19. but how Abraham could maintain religion in his family, without offering the proper encouragement to religion, it is impossible to understand.

This observation which I have now mentioned is not mine: it has been insisted upon by the \* best writers who have treated upon this subject, whom you have overlooked, as not worth your notice. Overlooked did I say? I must do you justice; you have done the objection the honour to look it on the face, and then very gallantly turned your back upon it. The passage I  
refer

\* See in particular Dr. Sherlock's *Immortality of the Soul.* Chap. 3. Sect. 2:



refer to is in p.477, where speaking of certain “ odly concurrent prejudices that have served ’till now, [*i. e.* ’till You arose] to discredit one of the most momentous truths that revelation has to boast of.” [viz. the Jewish ignorance of a future state] you mention this as one, that those who have been in the other opinion “ thought it incredible, that, whereas the Patriarchs—were certainly favoured with the revelation of man’s redemption, in which the doctrine of a future state is so eminently contained, they should not have communicated it to their posterity and people.” As likewise, “ they could not conceive how a religion could be worthy of God which did not propose to its followers a future state.” The foregoing argument, Sir, takes in both these prejudices, as you are pleased to call them; and the one is the foundation of the other. And what do you now say, to shew them to be prejudices and nothing else? Not one word : but if you would write to the conviction of your readers, it lies upon you to shew, upon what principle the common religion in those times could have been supported, if the doctrine of a future state was



not the subject of the common belief ; an impracticable attempt, if you yourself are to be believed, who have told us in the strongest terms, that this doctrine is essential to religion. I confess, Sir, it very much surprizes me, as I believe it does all persons who will consider, to hear, that when all nations of the world had this doctrine, the people of God Alone should be without it ; and that it should never be revealed but to some few particular favourites, who were to keep it a Secret from the rest of mankind. You, Sir, I presume will not deny that this notion, in some shape or other, prevailed among all nations, the most barbarous scarce excepted, from the remotest antiquity : how will you account for this upon your supposition ? will you say that it was a mere politic invention of legislators ? no ; you call it an impious tenet\* : will you alledge that it was the deduction of natural reason among the more wise and considerate, and encouraged by legislators ? be it so ; did revelation make the people of God more stupid than the rest of mankind ?—But the  
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\* Preface to Vol. ii. p. 8.



proper reflection to be made here is this : if the knowledge of a future state be discoverable by natural light, it is then a knowledge naturally fit for man, and therefore fit for him at all times and in every age ; and how is it then that you tell us, that this doctrine when revealed to a few, was kept secret from the many, as not yet fit for publick discovery ? is the same truth fit to be known, when considered as the subject of natural enquiry, and unfit to be known, when considered as the subject of supernatural Revelation ?

These things want great explanation ; and till they are explained, I shall take the liberty to set it down as a very probable opinion at least, that this doctrine was the common belief of the people of God, from Adam to the days of Abraham : which admitted, it will likewise be as probable, that the Israelites brought this doctrine with them into Egypt, and preserved it until the days of Moses ; for by the Scripture it appears, that in all the time of their bondage they had not forgotten the covenant made with their fathers. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he



made himself known to him by this title, *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, Exod. iii. 6. Under the same title he is directed to make God known to his brethren. *Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you*, vers. 15. All this implies that they were well acquainted with God's covenant made with their fathers; which had they not been, they would have been in no condition to have put themselves under Moses as their leader, who came to them in quality of a messenger of God, in execution of that covenant.

You tell us indeed, that during their stay in Egypt, the Israelites were “Alienated from the God of their fathers,” p. 281. So they were as to their manners and worship; but not as to their owning him for the true God, as you yourself confess, p. 393, where you say, that “their defection from the God of Israel, wicked and abominable as it was, never consisted in their rejecting him as a false God,—but only in joining idolatrous rites, and foreign worship,



ship, to those of the true God :” and p. 400, you say farther, that in the “ period immediately preceding their captivity [not before] they began to entertain doubts, concerning God’s peculiar regard to them as his chosen people.” If then during their stay in Egypt, they retained the knowledge of the true God, and considered themselves as his chosen people, they must have remembered the covenant by which they were made such, and the hopes which their forefathers had grounded upon it ; the hopes, I mean, of a future state, which they were so much the less likely to forget, as you tell us yourself that it was “ a fundamental maxim of the religious policy of Egypt, to propagate by every kind of method, the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, as the necessary support of all religion and government, p. 343.”

From what has been said then we see,

1. The weakness and insufficiency of your argument, that because Moses taught not the doctrine of a future state, therefore the people believed it not : for thus you reason, p. 461, “ one might fairly conclude



clude that the people's not having this doctrine was a Necessary Consequence of Moses's not teaching it, in a law which solemnly forbids the least addition to the written institution :” and in fact, you have so concluded : for at the beginning of this section (p. 446 — 449.) having taken some pains to prove, what is not disputed, that the sanctions of the Jewish law were temporal only, and that the doctrine of a future state had no place in the Mosaic institutes ; you “ presume so much on the privilege of common sense, as to suppose that your reader will grant without any more ado, that the doctrine of life and immortality was Not Yet Known to the People.” — It is very absurd in you to argue as you do here, that because Moses taught not this doctrine in his law, therefore he taught it not at all : but I go farther, and say, that admitting that Moses never gave the least hint, or intimation concerning it, your conclusion will not hold ; for it rests upon this most false presumption, that it depended entirely upon Moses's teaching or not teaching this doctrine, whether the people did or did not believe it ; or in  
other



other words, that if they had it not from Moses, they could not have had it any where else. Suppose a deist should alledge, that the Israelites learned this doctrine in Egypt, where also Moses himself might have learned it, how would you prove the contrary? since you confess the Egyptians had it, and that it was the policy of Egypt to propagate this doctrine by all methods: it will not avail you to reply, that "the Israelites resided among these idolaters, safe and unmixed, the Egyptians being by numerous institutions forbid all fellowship and communication with all strangers whatsoever, and having besides a particular aversion to the profession of this family," p. 342: for this notwithstanding, you tell us (and it is true) that "they were prodigiously attached to the idolatries of Egypt—had contracted all the fashionable habits of Egypt—had polluted themselves with all kinds of Egyptian abominations—were violently carried away to all the customs and superstitions of Egypt," p. 284, 291, 292, 346. They were not then such ill neighbours: they learned from Egypt every thing that was bad; and could they not  
learn



learn this one good thing?—But, as I have shewn, there was no occasion for the Israelites to go to the Egyptians for this doctrine: they might, for any thing that you have proved to the contrary, have had it by constant, uninterrupted tradition, handed down to them by their forefathers, who took it from the very original source, from whence the Egyptians had it themselves. This, in my apprehension, is the most likely account of the matter, that the doctrine of a future state was as old as Adam, as being the very essence of the covenant of redemption, and being of equal interest to all mankind, was propagated by his posterity wherever they settled and formed themselves into civil societies: and this will fully answer the remaining part of your objection, which is, that the law of Moses “forbad the least addition to the written institutes.” Were it as certain that the Jews had no knowledge of the doctrine of a future state, before Moses spake to them, as it is true that the sanctions of his law are purely temporal; and had the case been, that Moses introduced this doctrine upon his own authority, as an additional sanction,



sanction, he would then have added to the written institutes : but upon the supposition that Moses found them in possession of this doctrine, in consequence of a former covenant, what Moses hath said in testimony to this doctrine, be it little, or be it much, is no more an addition to the law, than if he had taught them arithmetick, geometry, or any other science, in which the essence and constitution of the law hath nothing to do : little indeed it is, very little that Moses hath said upon this subject. And

2. We now see the reason why : as an authorized minister, he had nothing to do with it. For the explaining this let it be observed, that the covenant made with Abraham, had † two parts ; one, the promise of a seed that was to be *a blessing to all nations*, which was the spiritual covenant ; the other, the promise of the *land of Canaan*, to Abraham's posterity, which was the temporal covenant : of this last covenant Moses was the minister ; but the accomplishment of the first was reserved

† Bp. Sarum. Ibid.



to be the work of a much greater person than he ; I say the accomplishment of the first ; for this branch of the covenant was so far opened to mankind from the beginning, as to convey that hope which should be proper to lay the foundation of a reasonable worship, as I have just now argued ; but the full manifestation of it was reserved for the son of God, who was to appear in the flesh, when, by the execution of the temporal covenant, a people should be raised up to prepare the way for his reception. To this purpose (to wit, for the execution of the temporal covenant) Moses was sent : and what had he now to do as to the spiritual covenant ? plainly nothing but to leave it in the condition in which he found it, i. e. under that degree of light, whatever it was, which the Providence of God had thought fit to give concerning it, by the Revelations made to the fathers, until such time as that prophet should arise, whose province it was to be to explain it more perfectly. And this is what Moses has most punctually and exactly performed ; for look into the four last books of the Pentateuch, and



and you will find nothing but what relates to the temporal covenant ; and in the book of Genesis, which is a history of God's providence from the creation to his own times, he records the covenant indeed in both its parts, as the one was the foundation of his own mission, the other of their future hopes ; but still he keeps within his own limits, nor takes notice of any matters that were the proper subject of the spiritual covenant, any farther than to point out the faith already received, and to which God in former times had given publick testimony, which any ordinary historian might have done as well as he. For this reason, Sir, I must be of opinion, that the common account why Moses has said so little of a future state, viz. " that the people had been so well instructed by the patriarchs that he had no Need to say more," and which at p. 452. you treat with great contempt, is a very proper account : for though Moses had no authority to teach the doctrine of a future state as being no part of his mission ; yet in the quality of an historian, he might have recorded what was  
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the ancient faith as minutely as he had pleased, and had he found That doctrine lost among his brethren, it is highly probable he would have been more circumstantial, and, which he certainly might have done without exceeding the bounds of his commission, have made use of all the weight that ancient authorities could give, to call them back again. But upon supposition that the ancient faith still subsisted among them in its full vigour, it was more natural for him to give those few distant hints which he has given, than needful for him to say more ; as no historian chuses to burden his history with things familiarly known and understood in the times in which he writes. If you can shew this to be a weak evasion, shew it ; but you have not shewn it yet, but taken it up upon a presumption that you have proved (what you have not proved) that Moses was studiously cautious on this head ; which opinion, fond as you are of it, is the very last that my common sense will suffer me to come into.

I should hope it may now appear to be a very probable supposition, that the Israelites  
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in Moses's time were in possession of the doctrine of a future state, by ancient tradition handed down from their forefathers. I say Probable: I go no farther. Probability in this case is enough for me, and a great deal too much for you ; for where there is only a bare possibility on one side of a question, Demonstration on the other can never stand. But this argument will receive great confirmation, and it will be a thorough confutation of your scheme, should any evidence be found in the Old Testament, to prove that the doctrine of a future state was the faith of the Jewish church, in the times succeeding Moses and before any new revelations of it were given ; for upon this foot that faith will be resolvable into nothing else but the ancient tradition as yet subsisting. It will be proper therefore to go down to the times lower than Moses, and see how this case stands.

If a man that had never read the bible should read your representation of it, he would be apt to conclude that there are no marks or traces of it to be found. For you tell us, that though “ the bible contains a very circumstantial history of this people

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from the time of Moses to the time of the captivity ; not only a history of private occurrences, but of private adventures in the lives of particular persons of both sexes, and of all ages, stations, characters and complexions ;—yet in none of these different circumstances of life, in none of these various casts of composition do we ever find any of them acting on the motives, or influenced by the prospect of a future state ; or indeed expressing the least hopes or fears, or common curiosity concerning it.” Upon which you ask —— “Is it possible to conceive that — the doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment should never once appear to have had any share in the peoples thoughts, if indeed it made part of their religious opinions ?” p. 462, 463. Why truly, Sir, there is a difficulty in conceiving it ; and yet were the case as you have represented it, I should not venture to call it Demonstration. Mere negative proofs are of all others the most uncertain, and conclude either something or nothing, as circumstances may be. But Sir, I am afraid you have exaggerated the matter a little : What ? None acting upon the motives or  
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influenced by the prospect of a future state! None expressing the least hopes or fears, or curiosity concerning it! This we shall see by and by; but before I begin, there is one point that must be settled with you.

You tell us, p. 480, that “as your position is, that a future state of reward and punishment was not taught in the Mosaic dispensation, all texts brought to prove the knowledge of it after the time of David are nothing to the purpose; for what was known after this time could not supply the want through so many ages up to Moses.” Or, as you have repeated it in your second Edition, p. 483. “What was known after this time, could not supply the want of what was unknown for so many ages before. This therefore (add you) puts all the prophetic writings out of the question:” which is such reasoning as I cannot understand. The question is, what is the Faith of the ancient Jewish Church, from the time of Moses, till such time as new revelations concerning a future state came in? I take this period just as you yourself have stated it, *i. e.* from Moses to the Captivity, or thereabouts; for then it was, as you suppose, that new

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light brake in, and that the doctrine of a future state began to open itself by the teaching of the prophets. Be it then, Sir, that the prophetic writings are out of the question, it is most evident that the preceding sacred writers, whether before or after David, are not out of the question : You say that from Moses to the time of the prophets, the doctrine of a future state was not known among the people of the Jews ; is it not a direct confutation of this notion if evidence can be produced at any time within that period that it was known ? surely it is ! and give me leave to observe, that such texts will be evidence, not only to the age to which they refer, but for the ages preceding upwards as high as Moses : so it being supposed that no revelations of this sort were given between Moses and the prophets, or at least none for general use, it will be very difficult, as I have just now hinted, to ascribe this knowledge to any thing, but the current, ancient tradition.

To come now therefore to the argument. I lay it down as my first principle, that the ancient Jews did believe that the Soul lived after the body was dead ; a point so uncontestably



testably clear from the Old Testament, that you have admitted it yourself as we have already seen. The story of Saul's going to the witch at Endor to fetch up the soul of dead Samuel, recorded 1 Sam. xxviii. proves this to have been the Prevailing opinion. And to this we are to refer all those passages, of which there are a great many, where death is described by *giving up the ghost*; where men are said *to be gathered unto their fathers*; and to this likewise David most plainly alludes 2 Sam. xii, 23. where upon the death of the child of his adulterous bed, he says, *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.* You are pleased to dispute the meaning of one of these phrases, that of being *gathered unto his fathers*, p. 555, 556. But you might have well spared your pains: you cannot deny, that to understand the phrase as referring to this notion yields a very just and pertinent sense; and since you have allowed that the Jews had this notion, to what purpose was it to strain your invention to find out another meaning? Passing then this by, and accepting what you have so freely admitted, that the Jews did believe the separate existence of the soul, I from



hence conclude, that they did believe a future state in the sense now contended for. You tell us indeed, that though the ancient Jews believed the separate existence of the soul, yet they “had not any interesting speculations concerning its state of separation.” How is this proved? why thus: “the book of Ecclesiastes which speaks the sentiments of the Jews at that time [has these words] *Who knoweth the spirit of a man that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward to the earth*, chap. iii. 21. And again, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it*, Chap. xii. 7. Yet this writer—says at the same time, *But the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward for the memory of them is forgotten*, Chap. ix. 5.” p. 474, 475.

This is the whole of what you say to prove that the Jews had no interesting speculations concerning the soul in its state of separate existence, but “simply concluded, that it returned to him who gave it;” viz. that the same authority which assures us that the soul did return to God, hath told us also that the dead have no reward :



reward : but suppose, Sir, it should appear, as it will appear hereafter, that the meaning of the sacred writer, when he says that the dead have no reward, was not to say any thing in derogation from the doctrine of a future state of reward ? why then this curious distinction will stand unsupported by any proof at all ! but it is too material a point to be suffered to pass upon your bare word. Proved it must be ; and before you undertake it a second time, I desire you would please to explain a little what sort of existence with God that must be in which a man has no interest ; and in what material respect the soul of man that goeth upward would, upon this supposition, differ from the soul of a beast that perisheth. It seems to me by much too cold an interpretation of the phrase *returning to God*, to suppose that it imports no more than a simple existence with God ; he that goes to God, must go to him for something ; and what should this be but to receive the reward of his doings ? Solomon himself hath explained it in this sense but a few verses after, *God shall bring every work into JUDGMENT, with*



*every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be bad, Eccles. xii. 14. We meet with the same sentiment, chap. iii. 16, 17. where having complained how unequally men are dealt with in this world, that wickedness was in the place of judgment, and iniquity in the place of righteousness, he refers himself to the next world as where all this would be set right. God shall JUDGE the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time THERE for every purpose and for every work. This shews that the notion of a separate state in those times was not the notion of a state of simple existence, but of a state of reward; and it farther appears from Proverbs xiv. 32. The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath HOPE in his death. You indeed interpret this passage as signifying only that "the righteous hath hope that he shall be delivered from the most imminent dangers;" p. 566, and in support of this interpretation you refer us to Psal. xxxiii. 19. and lvi. 13. But these passages are nothing to your purpose: in the first of these places the psalmist says, that the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him,*  
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*to deliver their soul from death.* In the latter he thanks God that he HAD *delivered his soul from death.* But to be *delivered FROM death*, and to *have hope IN death*, are very different things; to have hope *in death*, signifies to have hope *at the time of death*, and this must be hope in something *after death*; for when death comes, all hopes from this world are at an end. There are not wanting, I confess, who have interpreted death here as signifying worldly afflictions of the greater kind; but this is plainly departing from the literal to a figurative meaning; a liberty which you will never allow when it will do your cause any disservice. You have followed this interpretation because it best suits your purpose, but you give no reason for it: an easy way of answering difficulties. It is thus that you rid yourself of another passage, Eccles. xi. 9. *Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth—but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*: that is, say you, “God will certainly punish thy offences either in thy own person or in thy posterity,” p. 567. Thus you dogmatize: but why this interpretation—



terpretation rather than the other ? there is nothing in the context which ties the notion of judgment down merely to temporal judgment ; but it favours your hypothesis, and that is enough.

Let us now go to the book of Psalms, which being a composition of the devotional kind, we may there expect to find more of this matter ; nor will our expectation fail us. I offer, in the first place, to your consideration the whole 39th Psalm, which is penned in such a strain, that if a Christian should desire to shew his conviction of the vanity of this life, and his hopes of a better, he could not do it in more apposite terms ; for which reason the church of England has thought fit to make use of it as a part of the burial office. It appears that David, when he composed this Psalm, was in great distress, and that his affairs, in all human appearance, were almost desperate : full of these melancholy and desponding thoughts he breaks out (ver. 4.) and says, *Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am. Behold thou hast made my days as an hand breadth,*



*breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in a vain shew; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. We must observe here that the complaint lies not singly against his own particular circumstances of life, but against human life in general, which in its Best Estate he declares to be but a vain and empty shew: therefore he says (ver. 7.) that he places his confidence, not upon any thing in this world, but upon God only. And now, Lord, what wait I for? MY HOPE IS IN THEE. What is that hope which a man can have in God, abstracted from all trust in the blessings and comforts of this life? can it relate to any thing but the happiness of a life to come? it cannot.—Yet still he prays for deliverance from his present afflictions, not because his hopes lay here, but that wicked men might not take a handle from his afflictions to reproach him, and in him the providence of God. Deliver me from all my transgressions, and make me not the reproach of the foolish, ver. 8.*

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Those who look no farther than this world, would naturally be apt to judge him by his lot in this world ; but he calls them foolish for so doing ; which implies that his hopes extended to another. And this he speaks plainly, ver. 12. *I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were.* That David here calls himself and his fathers strangers and sojourners, in reference to the next World, is exceeding clear, from the whole scope of this meditation \* ; and therefore in the next verse he very naturally falls upon the mention of his death, and prays to God to give him time to prepare himself for it. *O spare me, that I may recover strength before I GO HENCE AND BE NO MORE.*

There is another psalm inserted in the same office, not less pertinent because it is ascribed to Moses, I mean the 90th, where after a lively description of the shortness and vanity of human life, the psalmist concludes with this serious address to God ; *so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to WISDOM*, ver. 12. What is that wisdom

\* See 1 Chron. xxix. 15. where it is immediately subjoined—our days ON EARTH are as a shadow, &c.



Wisdom which the shortness of human life directs us to, if you suppose that nothing is to come after death? why, not the wisdom which religion teacheth, but which this world teacheth; which surely! is not what the Psalmist meant. I wonder therefore, Sir, that you, when you undertook (as you say, p. 568) to examine “ALL the passages of moment that you could ever hear of, objected to the opinion that a future state of reward and punishment” was not the belief of the ancient Jews, should not think these passages worth your notice: of as little moment as you may esteem them, I am persuaded that had you read such discourses in any Christian author, you would presently have concluded that he was talking of a life to come, and the rewards of it; and I am as fully convinced that you would have made the same conclusion here, if you had not had a cause to serve that would not stand with it. Nor let it be objected, that such passages in a Christian writer would be an evidence of his belief of a future state, because it is Otherwise known and confessed, that Christians do believe a future state; not so in a Jewish writer, because



cause it is a point Disputed whether the Jews held any such belief or not; for it is Thus Far confessed that the Jews did believe a future state, that they believed that the soul survived the body in a state of separate existence, only you pretend, that they had no Interesting speculations concerning the soul in that state of separation; but you have not yet proved that the Jews had no interesting speculations concerning the soul in its separate state of existence; nor, permit me say, will you ever be able to prove it by any evidence equal to that which arises from the passages I have mentioned to shew the contrary. You must trust me a little for this, till I come to your negative proofs, which I shall be sure not to forget.

Near akin to these is Psalm xvi. where David first of all thanks God for his mercies towards him. *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen upon me in pleasant places. Yea, I have a goodly heritage, I will bless the Lord,—ver. 5, 6, 7.* Next he professes his own integrity, and the confidence he had from hence that God would



would continue his mercy and loving kindness to him. *I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.*—Thus far he is considering his worldly condition. Then he proceeds and says — *My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption,* ver. 8, 9, 10. St. Peter has claimed this passage as relating to Christ's resurrection, Acts ii. 25—29. i. e. in a secondary sense; but as David is here speaking of himself, to him it must refer in some sense or other: the point is in what sense? does it relate to his hopes in this world, or in the next? to the latter most plainly. the 11th verse proves it. *Thou wilt shew me the path of Life; in thy presence is fullness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more.* To be in the presence of God, or at his right hand, and there enjoy everlasting pleasures, are expressions by much too great to describe any worldly happiness; and this will direct us to understand, the *leaving his soul in hell, and suffering him to see corruption,* as relating to his  
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lying down in the grave ; and *the path of life* as signifying the way to eternal happiness. Whether David understood that his body was to arise after death, I do not take upon me to determine at present ; but the expression cannot import less than this, that God would not suffer him finally to perish, but preserve him to taste and enjoy those pleasures at his right hand, which he hath laid up for them that obey him.

This passage is one of those you have thought fit to take notice of ; and what do you say to it ? why you tell us that the meaning of it is, that God would not “ suffer David to fall Immaturely, as was the certain lot of the transgressors of the law ; and that walking in the law of God is the highest pleasure as well as security.” But conscious to yourself that this interpretation falls short of the natural force of the words, you immediately add — “ all which is expressed in terms so magnificent, as shews this psalm to have a spiritual as well as literal meaning.” And a little after you say of this and some other of the passages in the Old Testament, that are commonly urged to prove that the ancient Jews believed the doctrine



doctrine of a future state, that they “are expressed by the holy spirit in such a manner as makes it now most evident that they have likewise a higher and sublimer meaning,” p. 564, 568. I think, Sir, that you have here granted all that I have occasion to say of the high, sublime, spiritual meaning which you say is contained in these passages, can be no other than what I am contending for, the doctrine of a future state; and if, as you say, this meaning is most evident from the very force of the terms in which the Psalmist has expressed himself, it must have been most evident at the time when these psalms were penned; unless you will say that the Jews understood the force of their own language less than we do. I do not suppose that the ancient Jews took their belief of a future state from these passages, or any other passages in the writings of these times: as David expressed his own sense in these passages, so he expressed the current sense of the Jewish Church; which I have as much reason to say, as you had to say that Solomon spake the common sentiments of the Jews, when he taught the



separate existence of the soul in his book of Ecclesiastes.

I will mention one passage more of like import with the former, Psal. xlix. 12--15. where the Psalmist speaking of wicked men, says, *they are like the beasts that perish---like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.---* But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me. Upon which passage you comment thus : “ the meaning is—that the wicked should be untimely cut off and destroyed in the morning, that is, by the judgment of the law, which was administered in the morning hour ; but that His life, and the life of the upright should be prolonged,” p. 565. But surely, Sir, this is not the sense that was intended in this passage. It is very remarkable that the Psalmist introduces this discourse as what not the Jews only, but all men were concerned to attend to. *Hear this all ye people, give ear ALL ye inhabitants OF THE WORLD, high and low, rich and poor together. My mouth shall speak of wisdom, and the meditation of*  
*my*



*my heart shall be of understanding.* What is the lesson he is now going to teach? why that good men should not despond under afflictions, nor be offended at the prosperity of the wicked. *Wherefore should I (i. e. wherefore should the righteous) fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about, or when God shall correct me for the transgressions of my life? ver. 5. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him, ver. 16, 17.* But what shall be the end of such men? why, they will be like the beasts that perish; they shall lye in the grave, and death shall feed on them. It is plain that these words describe the state of bad men after death; to make the opposition just, therefore, the words following must describe the state of good men after death; *but God will redeem my soul (i. e. the souls of the righteous) from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.* And what are we to learn from this different account of the end of good and bad men but this; that whilst These are left



under the power of death, estranged from God ; those shall go to God, and be received to those pleasures which are at his right hand? you interpret these words as importing only that the life of the upright shall be preserved and prolonged ; poor consolation indeed if they are to be preserved to know yet more sorrow ! or if they are preserved for better days, still if it be but for a short space, and short, very short is the longest, it will contain but a very low sense ; wicked men shall be left under the power of death for ever—the righteous shall have respite for a short space, and then pass to a state of existence which nothing concerns them. Thus stands the reckoning according to your account : but how jejune, and without taste is this ! you observe that “ life or redemption is not here opposed to misery and torments ;” Expressly it is not ; but your inference will not hence follow, “ that therefore life must signify a life here on earth ;” for life in a future state with God, is rightly opposed both to a state of absolute non-existence, and to existence in a state of separation from God ;

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as living with God is certainly a most happy state, one can hardly imagine but living without him must be a very miserable one.

I have selected the chief of such texts as speak most directly to the point in question, and have given what I apprehend to be the sounder interpretation of them; not denying that they have their obscurities, which have led different writers to different sentiments concerning them. I very willingly allow you that the general turn of the book of Psalms has an aspect upon temporal things; which may appear strange to those, who judge of the spirit of these compositions by what they see of compositions of the same kind under the gospel dispensation; but such should consider that the authors of this book, and of all the other books in the Old Testament, lived in the age of the temporal covenant, in which God had undertaken with the people of the Jews for temporal good things, as the condition of their obeying the law given by Moses; therefore it was but correspondent to the dispensation they were



under, to be attentive to God's dealing in this respect, as what the very covenant itself had taught them would be the first, immediate, concern of his Providence on their behalf. But yet as there was a spiritual covenant subsisting together with the temporal, of which they were also heirs, and which held forth to them hopes of another kind, there is evidence enough to shew that the wiser and better part of the Jews had these hopes in view. For to mention one thing more ;

It is very certain that God's temporal covenant concerned the Jews, and them only ; the nations at large had no interest in it ; and yet the nations, i. e. all mankind without exception, are in the book of Psalms expressly mentioned as the subjects of the righteous judgment of God. *The Lord loveth righteousness and judgment—from the place of his habitation he looketh upon ALL the inhabitants of the EARTH—he considereth all their works,* Psal. xxxiii. 5, 14, 15. to what end ? does God stand as an idle spectator of the works of men ? no ; he considereth their works in order to bring them to  
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JUDGMENT ; so says Psal. ix. *The Lord shall endure for ever ; he hath prepared his throne for judgment, and he shall judge THE WORLD in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness,* Ver. 7, 8. So Psal. lxxvii. 4. *Let the NATIONS be glad and sing for joy, for thou shalt judge the people righteously.* Again, Psal. xcvi. *Fear before the Lord ALL THE EARTH. Say among the HEATHEN that the Lord reigneth—he shall judge the people righteously. Let the Heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad before the Lord, for he cometh to judge THE EARTH ; he shall judge THE WORLD with righteousness, and the people with his truth.* Had this been said of the Jewish nation only, no doubt I should hear for answer that it relates to temporal judgment, which was administered among them with perfect exactness ; but was the case the same every where else ? no ; your very contending for an equal Providence among that people, as distinguished from the rest of mankind, carries with it a confession that every where else it was administered unequally ; and in fact we find it so to be. With what



truth then could God, as universal governor, be set forth as judging in Righteousness, and ministering True, that is Equal judgment but in reference to another world, where he is to act as universal judge? the Israelites were a scourge to some of the nations by the just judgment of God; but these were but a handful in comparison to the whole earth, whereof God is declared to be the Judges and with respect to this judgment it is said, Psal. lxii. 12. that he will *render to Every man according to his work*; which if he doth not, he doth not judge the world in righteousness. Read the 50th Psalm, where you will find God's general judgment described in such apposite terms, that even the Gospel itself scarce speaks any thing plainer. *The mighty God, even the Lord hath spoken and called THE EARTH from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.—Our God shall come and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the Heavens from above, and to THE EARTH that he may judge his people.* Could the Jews read this, and not think of a future judgment?



ment? was there any thing in any period of the temporal covenant, that literally answered to this description? If you think there was, pray be so kind as to shew it me.

These, which I have now set down, are the principal traces of the doctrine of a future state, that I can find in the ages between Moses and the Prophets: I shall only observe farther, that as in the ages before Moses there was a visible example of the execution of God's providence in reference to a future state, in the translation of Enoch; so in the ages after Moses there was a like example in the translation of Elijah. Against the clearness of this fact, as it is recorded in the Old Testament, you have no exception; and the story is indeed very circumstantial. *There appeared a chariot of fire, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven,* 2 Kings, ii. 11. But you tell us, as we have seen before, that the reason of this was, that "when this latter history was written, it was thought fit to lay a preparation for the dawning of a future state;" otherwise, as we are to understand, the story would have been wrapped up in as much obscurity as that of Enoch. You suppose, what I am ready enough to admit,



admit, that the book of Kings was written about the time of the captivity; which period some Christian writers have represented as the opening or dawning of the Gospel Light; which notion with the expression, you have adopted for your own; but to shew you the emptiness of your observation, that therefore this story is recorded in so circumstantial a manner, which at any time before would have been but obscurely delivered, pray observe; that your argument supposes, that this story as it stands recorded in the book of Kings, was a notice or intimation to that age in which this book was written, that God would receive good men to himself, when the time should come that they were to be taken from the world; for where else will be the Preparation for the dawning of a future state, which you say it was now thought fit to lay in? but if this is the case, was not the fact itself in the age when it happened, and the knowledge of it by any credible testimony at any time after, as strong a notice to those ages, as the report of it by the author of the book of Kings was or could be to those who lived at and after the time of writing this history? without question it was; consider then, Sir,  
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that though the date of the book of Kings rises no higher than the captivity, yet the date of the fact recorded goes very near three hundred years backward, within less than a hundred years of the death of Solomon ; You treat this story as if it had never been known or heard of 'till the author of the book of Kings put it into his history ; had this been the case the fact could never have happened, and we should never have heard of it all. But the fact was old, whilst the history was new ; and being so extraordinary a case, we are to suppose that the memory of it was preserved, not only by common tradition, but in ancient memoirs and records, of which this history may be no more than a collection. In virtue of this reasoning, Sir, you will be obliged to carry up your Preparation for the dawning of a future state much higher than your hypothesis will admit ; and say, that it was laid in in the days of Elijah ; and when your Epocha is thus unsettled, where will you fix ? you can fix no where, Sir, in my humble apprehension, but upon this one, true point, that a future state was the Common Hope of those times, as we have shewn  
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it to have been in the days of David and Solomon ; and upon this supposition the example of Elijah will be a publick testimony on the part of God, strongly confirming this hope. But if you suppose, that the Jews were, as you represent them to have been, ignorant of this doctrine, even as the brutes, you take away the very foundation that should make it an instructive lesson ; and what such an example could beget, besides wonder and amazement at the strangeness of the thing, I do not apprehend.

Taking then these evidences of the belief of a future state among the Jews after the days of Moses, and comparing them with what we find of it in the patriarchal ages, it will amount, I think, to a very strong presumptive argument, that this doctrine had its rise from thence, and was preserved by constant tradition among the people of the Jews, throughout the whole Mosaic dispensation. If this should appear but Probable, your minor proposition will stand unsupported, and any conclusion which rests upon it will fail of course. But to make sure work, you have undertaken the negative side of the question, and pretend



tend to prove, both from the Old and New Testament, that from the days of Moses to the captivity, the people of the Jews Had Not this doctrine : it is one thing, Sir, to say, we have no evidence of any such belief; another, to say we have evidence that there was no such belief ; the one might have been excused you ; the other is surely ! a stretch beyond all reason—But let us hear what you have to say.

You alledge \*, first, the saying of the woman of Tekoah to David, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. *We needs must die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.* A most hopeful beginning ! the woman certainly meant no more than that when we are once dead we shall no more return to this state of existence ; as the very phrase of gathering up shews ; when you spill water upon the ground you cannot gather it up, but if you spill a handful of corn you may ; and what do you in this case but restore it to its pristine state ? if a man should die and be even raised to a new state, you could not say, he is gathered up ; any more than you  
can

\* P. 465.



can say of a handful of seed that it is gathered up, when it produceth wheat or barley, or any other sort of grain. A like passage we have in Job, and to the same sense, Chap. vii. vers. 9. *As the cloud is consumed and vanished away, so he that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more ; i. e. to live in this Earthly, Human state, as the following verse shews. He shall return no more to his HOUSE neither shall his PLACE know him any more.* Why was this verse suppressed, but because you saw plainly it would spoil your argument? again ; chap. xiv. vers. 7.—12 *There is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again.—But man dieth and wasteth away, yea man giveth up the ghost and where is he ; as the waters fall from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep.* There is no necessity, at least, to interpret these words as denying a future state, though you will have it to have been so intended ; the text does not say that man shall NEVER rise again ; but that he shall not rise TILL the heavens be no more, i. e. till the  
the



the end and consummation of all things; which may import, that THEN he SHALL rise, and the passage will be a proof for the resurrection, as some able interpreters have understood it. But granting you all you can ask, that the meaning of this passage is, that when a man is dead, he shall NEVER be raised, it may intend no more than is intended in the foregoing passage, viz. that he shall rise no more to his natural state; which is very true, but nothing to your purpose.

You next go to the Psalmist. *In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks? Psal iv. v. —What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth? Psal xxx. 9.—Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave; or thy faithfulness in destruction? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? Psal. lxxxviii. 10. & seq.* To these you subjoin another passage from *Ecclus. ix. 5. For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they*



*they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.*

There is this infelicity attending the argument raised upon these passages, that if they come up to your purpose, they go beyond it too; for these passages declare not merely the popular belief, but the belief of the inspired writers themselves. If these passages are to be understood as denying a future state, the consequence will be that David and Solomon, or whoever else were the authors of these pieces, did not believe it; and how will this stand with your notion, that though the people did not believe this doctrine, yet the leaders and the prophets among them did? there is a wide difference between keeping a secret, *i. e.* being silent about a thing, and a direct denial of what a man believes to be true; and you yourself have granted that the prophets, though they might and did do the one, could not do the other. “They would not, say you, proclaim—nor could they on the other hand deny what they knew to be the truth.” p. 481. I should apprehend then, that, in order to save the honour of God’s prophets,  
you



you will find yourself under a necessity to accept of some qualified sense of these passages, and not to strain them up to the very rigour of the letter, as your constant manner of interpreting is. There is one passage more belongs to this class, which coming not from a prophet but from a king, will not be entitled to the benefit of this plea; and therefore I place it by itself. It is the saying of Hezekiah in his song of thanksgiving for his miraculous recovery, recorded in Isaiah, xxxviii. 18, 19. *The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living shall praise thee as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.*

It is remarkable, with respect to all these passages, that you have thought fit to report them nakedly, as if it was utterly beyond all controversy, that they must be understood as denying a future state; and would admit of no other meaning; whereas in some of them, the very words themselves do very plainly direct to another meaning: for instance; those words in Ecclesiastes where the preacher declares, *that the dead know not any thing, neither*



*have they any more a reward.* You would have us understand by this that the dead have, absolutely, no reward ; and this you bring as your sole proof that the Jews, though they believed the separate existence of the soul, yet believed it to be a state of simple existence : but if you will conclude from these words, that the dead have, absolutely, no reward, you must conclude likewise that they have, absolutely, no knowledge. A state of very simple existence truly ! the existence of stocks or stones ! the meaning therefore is not that the dead are absolutely without knowledge, absolutely without reward ; but that they have no knowledge of any thing that is done in this world, no reward by any thing pertaining to this world. The reason assigned shews it—*for the memory of them is forgotten* : a very good observation to prove that this world is nothing to them ; but it will not shew that the next world is nothing to them neither. The words which follow in the text, but which for reasons best known to yourself, you have suppressed, enforce this sense yet more strongly—*also their love and their hatred and their envy is now perished, neither*  
*have*



*have they any more a PORTION forever in ANY THING THAT IS DONE UNDER THE SUN.* Can any thing be plainer than that the reward or the portion here spoken of pertains to this world, and not to the next, of which nothing at all is said? So those words of Hezekiah; *the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth;* may mean no more than this, that the dead cannot set forth God's glory before men, or make his praise to be known upon the earth, as the Psalmist expresses it, Psal. lxxvii. 2. The latter part of the sentence shews it: *The living shall praise thee—the father to the son shall make known thy truth.* And why may not this be the sense of what David says?—*In death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks.* You might, Sir, if you had so pleased, have seen this account of these places in almost any commentator, if you had thought it worth your while to have consulted them.

Your last argument is taken from Jeremiah, in his Lamentations, where he says,



*our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have born their iniquities*, Lam. v. 7. upon which you thus comment, “The words imply that the fathers being dead bore no part of the punishment of their sins, but that it was all thrown upon the children; but could this possibly have been supposed, had the people been instructed in the doctrine of a future state?” p. 467. Observe here in the first place; that the sacred writer does not say that the dead fathers bore No part in the punishment of their own sins, which is the point upon which the argument turns, but it is your inference from what he has said, viz. that the children bore the iniquities of the fathers: but by what rule of logick does it follow, that because the children bear the fathers iniquities, therefore the fathers themselves bear them not? may not Both bear them, fathers as well as children? is it less true that the son suffers, because the father suffers as well as he?—Besides, of what sort of punishment does the prophet speak? why of temporal punishment, of the punishments of this life: be it admitted then, that by *bearing the iniquities of their fathers* is meant bearing



bearing the whole punishment of their iniquities, still it can mean no more than the whole punishment, as it respects this life; it can have no sort of relation to the punishments of the next. It might be added, that if the prophet spoke his own sense in this place, as there is all the appearance that he did, we shall then have another prophet, even in the time of the captivity, as ignorant of the doctrine of a future state as the people were.—But what has this text to do with the question in hand? by the very terms of the Jewish law, God had declared that he would *visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children*; and the captivity the nation was now under, is here represented as a remarkable instance of this sort of providence; which no doubt it was: but what inference will arise from hence, touching the faith of the Jews, concerning a future state, whether they did or did not believe it? There is certainly need of all the penetration you are master of, and a great deal more, to find it out!

So much for the first set of proofs; passages taken from the Old Testament. Let us now proceed to your next step at p. 468.



where you undertake to shew, what you say, “ is of the Greatest Weight, that the inspired writers of the New Testament expressly assure us of the same thing.” The Christian reader perhaps may be at a loss to know, why the testimony of the inspired writers of the New Testament should be of greater weight in this case, than the testimony of the inspired writers of the old ; but what is worse, unbelievers, for whose conviction I presume your Demonstration is intended, may ask by what right the authors of the New Testament, who lived at the distance of many hundred years, come to be admitted as evidence for the faith of the ancient Jewish church : to tell them, that they were inspired writers will be talking to no purpose ; but as I am arguing with you upon Christian principles, I claim no benefit from this plea ; their authority is admitted as decisive, if you have made it out that they speak in your favour. This is the point now to be tried.

You first cite St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Bodily exercise profiteth little ; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* These words you understand



stand as assigning to the law and the gospel their different functions ; to the law, the promise of life that now is ; to the gospel, the promise of the life that is to come. Be this admitted, for it will serve nothing to our present purpose to dispute it with you, what will arise from it ? why this, and this only, viz. that the reward of a future state or eternal life could not be challenged by, or in virtue of the law ; which no doubt is true ; but though the law gave not eternal life, the Jews had the promise of it, and, for ought that this passage says to the contrary, might have had the hopes of it too by the Evangelical Covenant, as subsisting under or together with the Legal Dispensation. *Sub lege, sed non ex lege*, is an old distinction : and a very right distinction it is ; for the Abrahamic covenant was the very Gospel covenant of eternal life, commencing in Adam and ending in Christ, the Mediator of that covenant : and in virtue of this covenant, which subsisted in its full force both before and under the law, it was that the Jews were the heirs of the promise according to St. Paul's doctrine. But how will all this help to prove that the Jews knew



nothing of a future state? one would rather infer, that as the Jews were under a covenant which contained the promise of eternal life, they had so much knowledge of this covenant imparted to them, as to have hopes of a future state; and that this is the very account which the writers of the New Testament give of this matter, will appear, I hope, very plainly in the course of this argument.

Your next proof is from the same apostle, Rom. v. 12. *As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law—Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses.—* Hereupon you ask, “how the apostle could possibly say that death reigned under the Mosaic dispensation, if that people had the knowledge of immortal life, to be procured by a Redeemer to come; any more than it can be said to reign now, with the same knowledge of a Redeemer past; since we agree that the efficacy of his death extends to all preceeding as well as succeeding ages?”

P. 470.

It



It is extreme difficult to comprehend how your argument concludes ; but I think it must be thus : if death reigned under the Mosaic dispensation, it must be said, to make the assertion good, either that those within that period had not the Benefit of eternal life through Christ, or that they had not the Knowledge of it : the benefit they certainly had ; for it is agreed that the efficacy of Christ's death extended to all preceding as well as succeeding ages : it remains then that they had not the knowledge of it. You argue after the same manner a little after, in the same page ; where having cited St. Paul's words to Timothy, *Jesus—hath abolished death* ; you add—" If death was abolished by Jesus Christ, it is certain that it reigned 'till his coming ; and yet it is as certain that it reigns no longer than while the tidings of the gospel are kept back, because we agree that Christ's death hath a retrospect." By which it is plain that you make the kingdom of death to consist in men's ignorance of a future state, for this reason, viz. because Christ's death hath a retrospect ; and consequently this kingdom  
can-



cannot consist in not having the benefit: but in my humble opinion, the kingdom of death hath nothing to do with either of these: when the apostle says *death reigned from Adam to Moses*, what does he mean? why nothing but this, that from Adam to Moses mankind were under the lot of mortality; subject to death; which, one single person excepted, they all tasted. So they were from Moses to Christ; and so they have been and will be from Christ to the end of the world, whatever it was that put it into your mind to suggest to the contrary. How, ask you, can death be said to have reigned under the Mosaic dispensation, any more than it can be said to reign now? as if now death reigned not! but where did you learn that death doth not now reign? can you produce any text of scripture which says it? no; St. Paul says here that *death reigned from Adam to Moses*; but neither he nor any other of the sacred writers have said that now it reigneth Not: but St. Paul hath said that which by construction, I think, amounts to the contrary: death must be said to Reign so long as his Power and Dominion holds;



holds ; and this will be till the end and consummation of all things ; *for the LAST enemy that shall be destroyed is DEATH*, 1 Cor. xv. 26.

Your next authority is 2 Tim. i. 10. *Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* To your comment upon the former part of this verse you have my answer already : to the Text I thus reply. Christ hath abolished death by offering up that sacrifice which was the price of our redemption : but as you confess that the efficacy of this sacrifice reached backward as well as forward, so might the knowledge of a future state. The latter part of the verse has a better appearance for you—*and hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* Upon which you reason thus : “ if life and immortality was brought to light through the gospel, it was, ’till the preaching of the gospel, kept hid and out of sight ; but if Moses and the prophets taught it, how was it brought to light through the gospel ! therefore those under the law Had No Knowledge of it.” p. 471 : or, as you have altered



tered the conclusion in your second edition, p. 473, "therefore the Generality of those under the law had no knowledge of it." You felt, I suppose that you had overshot your mark; and these words, *the generality of those*, were slipped in to cover the nakedness of your argument: but it will not do; for in fact it is true that the doctrine of a future state was known, and *generally* believed, ages before the coming of Christ. That it was generally taught and believed in the heathen world, you have taken great pains to prove: that the prophets also about the time of the captivity did teach it you allow; and in consequence of this you say, p. 580. that "at the time of the Maccabees this doctrine became national." You had reason to say this; for by the New Testament it appears that our Saviour found the Jews in possession of the doctrine of the resurrection. It was the distinction of the sect of the Sadducees in our Saviour's time, that they denied any resurrection; the Pharisees confessed it. Luke xx, 27. Acts xxiii. 8. And when Ananias the high priest, with the elders of the Jews, brought Paul before Felix, he  
says



says in his defence, *I have hope towards God, WHICH THEY THEMSELVES ALSO ALLOW, that there shall be also a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, Acts xxiv. 15.* Your argument then, Sir, cannot possibly stand in your General way of stating it; for may not I as reasonably ask, — If the ancient heathen legislators taught it; or if the main body of the Jewish nation believed it, before the coming of Christ, how was it brought to light by the Gospel? some Distinction then there must necessarily be to make the apostle's assertion agree with the real state of things; and we are to consider what the distinction is, and whether it will not serve my purpose as well as yours.

I observe then, Sir, that the thing precisely here intended, as what was brought to light by the gospel, is not a future state in the general notion of it, but, the *Resurrection of the body*. The words in the original suit this notion, Ζωὴ καὶ ἀφθαρσία, *Life and Incorruption*; plainly referring to the body which St. Paul tells us shall be *raised incorruptible*. The point then is, in what sense did Christ by his coming bring the doctrine of the resurrection to light? was it



it that he made the first discovery of it to the Jewish nation? it cannot be; for we have seen already that they had it before; from the time of the Maccabees, as you confess, and will be fully shewn by and by. Now therefore, Sir, if this text will stand with supposing what cannot be denied, that the knowledge of a future state was generally received among the Jews, from the time of the Maccabees down to Christ, will you be pleased to inform me why it will not as well stand with supposing that they had this doctrine for as many ages backward as there shall otherwise appear reasons to carry it? This, Sir, is all that I have occasion to say to You. Clear your own hypothesis from this difficulty, and you will at the same time clear mine: and it is no hard matter to do both. To bring to light does not here signify to Discover what before was absolutely unknown; this you will be obliged to admit; it signifies therefore the more Open or Public Manifestation, of what before was known either Imperfectly or but to a Few. I take the latter sense, though both senses may concur, for this was the case of the doctrine of the Resurrection  
when



when Christ came. The Heathen world knew nothing of it: the Jews indeed had received it ages before: but what where the people of the Jews in comparison to the nations of the whole earth! whilst this doctrine was confined within the narrow inclosure of the Jewish church, it might well be considered as hid in a corner, then only to be brought to light when the whole human race were to be made partakers of the benefit of it. This interpretation yields a very natural and easy sense; and it should not be omitted, what the learned bishop Bull\* hath noted long ago, that the following words strongly point to this sense; for the apostle having said that Christ had *brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*, instantly subjoins, whereunto [i. e. to which work of bringing life and immortality to light] *I am appointed a Preacher, and an Apostle, and a Teacher* [ἐδυνάω] *of the GENTILES*; which seems to intimate, that preaching to the gentiles was the thing precisely intended by bringing life and immortality to light. This agrees with the  
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\* Harm. Apost. Dissert. poster. Cap. 10. § 13.



character of Christ, who is said to be *a light to the Gentiles* ; but I do not remember any passage in which Christ is characterized as a light to the Jews. He was a *light to lighten the Gentiles*, but the GLORY of his people Israel, to whom *pertained the adoption and the promises*, to whom were committed the oracles of God, which had their accomplishment in Christ. You indeed think fit to represent the Jews as a “ people sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death,” p. 449. for which you cite Mat. iv. 16. *The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up.* But pray let the context be considered. It is said, ver. 12, &c. that *Jesus departed into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he came to Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast upon the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim.*—It follows, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, *the land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee OF THE GENTILES. The people which sat in darkness, &c.* Is it now so clear a case that the people here characterized as *sitting in darkness*



*ness* are the Jews? may it not as well be referred to the Gentiles who dwelt intermixt with the Jews in that part of Galilee, where Jesus now came to preach, and upon whom therefore, according to what had been foretold by the ancient prophecies, the light now began to shine? I am persuaded, Sir, you cannot produce one plain passage in scripture where the Jews, as the people of God, are set forth as sitting in darkness and the shadow of death; but the Gentiles are frequently so described; and by that very prophet to whom the Evangelist refers. It is Isaiah who says, chap. xlix. 6. *I will give thee for a light to the GENTILES, that thou mayst be my salvation to the ends of the earth.* And again, chap. lx. 1. *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee, and the GENTILES shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.* With the language of the Old Testament that of the New agrees. To St. Paul Christ says, *I send thee unto the*



GENTILES *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. The same apostle writing to the Ephesians, and referring to their former Heathen state, says, ye were sometimes Darkness, but now are ye Light in the lord, Eph. v. 8. and St. Peter writing, as it seems, not to the Jews, or at least not wholly to them, but to Jewish profelytes, or Gentile converts, exhorts them thus,—That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God, 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10. I will not be positive that the observation fails in no single instance; but so far as I can find, it is at least generally true.—But be this as it will: the interpretation has no great dependence upon it, nor do I pin you down to it. If you can find a better you are welcome to make use of it; but none will you find that can support the inference you would draw, that the Jews before Christ had not the knowledge of a future state.*

Of near affinity with the foregoing passage is Heb. vii. 19. which you next cite;

*The*



*The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.* The question here is, what is this better hope? you suppose it to be the hope of a future state, and say—"that could not be said to be brought in which was there before." You add,—“The law wanted something which the gospel supplied; and what was that but the doctrine of a future state?” what you mean by this the following words very plainly shew.—“the law had a shadow of good things to come; by which, say you, is meant such a typical representation, so faintly delineated as not to be perceived by the people.” So then it seems the doctrine of a future state was so faintly exhibited under the law, that the people did not perceive, or know any thing about it; and this is inferred from what the apostle says, that the gospel was the bringing in of a Better Hope.

But all this, Sir, is reasoning against plain matter of fact. That, viz. the knowledge of a future state, could not be said to be brought in, by the gospel, which was there before, i. e. which was known and understood before. Why then, Sir,



permit me to say, the apostle has not spoke truth, for in fact it is true, and you have owned it, that the doctrine of a future state was received among the Jews before the gospel was preached by Christ. We must then of necessity look for another meaning; and had you carefully considered the context, you might perhaps have found out what the true interpretation of this passage is. At chap. vi. 11, 12. the apostle thus exhorts Christians: *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful but FOLLOWERS OF THEM, who through FAITH and patience INHERIT THE PROMISES.* Who are these of whom the apostle speaks as inheriting promises through faith, and whom he here sets forth as an example? they were Abraham and his children; for thus it follows: *For when God made the promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater he swear by himself, saying, surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so after he had patiently endured he obtained the promise.* Go on to the following verses and you will find him telling us, that the reason why  
God



God confirmed the promise to Abraham by an oath was, *that he might SHEW UNTO THE HEIRS of the promise the immutability of his counsel—that WE might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of THE HOPE that is set before us.* That by the hope that is set before us, us Christians, as a refuge unto which we have fled, is meant the hope of eternal life, I take to be past all dispute : therefore, the promise made to Abraham must contain that hope ; for how else would God's confirming the promise to Abraham by an oath, be the ground of our consolation ? but God confirmed this promise to Abraham to what end ? why that he might shew unto the Heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel : was not then the promise to be shewed to all the heirs ? to all who had interest in the promise ? no doubt ; for could the immutability of God's counsel in reference to a promise be shewed, without shewing the promise itself ? I think not. Can you reconcile this then, Sir, with your notion that the Patriarchs who received the promise of eternal life kept it *in the dark* ? can you believe that after all this, the apostle

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should



should presently tell us, that there was no hope of a future state among the People of God?—But what then is the better hope that was brought in by the preaching of the gospel? go a little farther and you will see. *If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what farther need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?* chap. vii. ver. 11. But he proves from the Psalmist that Christ was *a priest after the order of Melchisedec.* ver. 17. The Levitical priesthood then being at an end, when Christ came and took upon him the priesthood after another order, the Apostle hence infers the imperfection and cessation of the law itself. *The priesthood being changed, there is made also of necessity a change of the law.* ver. 12. Again, *there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, i. e. of the law, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.* This is the text in dispute; and you see plainly, that the better hope stands in opposition to the law, and there-



therefore must mean, not barely the hope of eternal life, but the whole Evangelical dispensation, as opened by Christ's coming in the flesh, by a very common figure stiled THE HOPE, because it was the subject of the hopes of ancient times, or because it was the groundwork or foundation of that great hope, the hope of eternal life. Now whatever may be said of the knowledge or expectation of eternal life in former times, whether it were little or much, or none at all, it is very truly and consistently said, that the Evangelical dispensation, as distinguished from the Legal, had no being 'till it was brought in by the coming of Christ. And hence the question which you ask; what was it that the law wanted which the gospel supplied? will receive a full and sufficient answer: it was whatever was peculiar to this last dispensation, and eminently and above all, Christ's Priesthood and Sacrifice, without which nothing could have been made perfect. The mere hope of eternal life, even supposing it to have been now first made known, could not be the thing; for as it is certain that this hope hath its whole force and



virtue from the Great Atonement, so it is certain that this was the thing pointed at in the old dispensation, and therefore is the accomplishment and perfection of it. By One Offering he hath Perfected *for ever them that are sanctified*, says the Apostle, Chap. x. ver. 14.

Your last argument is from the same epistle, Chap. viii, 6, 7. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been found for a second.* Upon which you thus remark: "If the first covenant [the legal covenant given by Moses] had been faultless, that is, had contained a better hope, or taught the doctrine of a future state, there had been no room for a second," p. 473. To which I reply; that the question is not what the covenant given by Moses did or did not contain: it is granted that the promise of eternal life was not by the law; but the point is, whether the hope of eternal life did subsist under the law; and this it might do, though the law Contained it not. If the promise  
of



of eternal life had been By the law, or which is all one, had the legal covenant Contained that promise, there would indeed have been no need of any other covenant ; but admitting that another covenant was necessary, and consequently that the promise of eternal life was not by the law, it may very consistently be said, that the hope of eternal life did subsist Under the law ; so long as it is allowed and maintained, that *that other* covenant which *did* contain the hope of eternal life was in force under the law ; and this is the case. The apostle indeed calls this covenant the second covenant ; but how was it the second ? why, in respect of its Accomplishment only, by the sacrifice of Christ ; for in respect of its Commencement it was prior to the law, as St. Paul expressly asserts, Gal. iii. 17. *The covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ* [meaning the Abrahamic covenant] *the law which was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul.* Now it is this covenant, I say, and the apostle says it too, which contained the hope of eternal life ; and where will be the inconsistency in saying, that in virtue of this covenant,



venant, the people of God, both before and under the law, had the hope of eternal life, though the law contained it not ; as in truth it could not contain it, being a covenant of another nature ?

I have now gone through your authorities from the New Testament ; and of the weight of them to uphold your negative proposition, that the ancient Jews *had not* the doctrine of a future state, let every common reader judge. The New Testament is undoubtedly against you ; as I shall more directly shew by considering some other passages which you have produced as objections to your system.

Let the first be those words of our Saviour, Matt. xxii. 31, 32. *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead but of the living.* I will beg leave, to this passage of St. Matthew to subjoin that of St. Luke which relates to the same matter, and which runs thus. *Now that the Dead are raised even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord, the God*  
*of*



*of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: For he is not a God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto him, Luk. xx. 37, 38.*

I must observe here in the first place, that this text fully justifies the distinction I have all along been reasoning upon, *viz.* that though the doctrine of a future state was no constituent part of the Mosaic dispensation, yet it was held forth by Moses. That it was no part of the Mosaic dispensation, is very plainly intimated in this expression, *EVEN* Moses shewed; which is as if our Saviour had said, “though Moses was not the Minister of the spiritual covenant, as I am, but of the temporal, yet *Even* He shewed the doctrine of the resurrection.” It was not his business, as an authorized teacher, to preach the doctrine of the resurrection; nevertheless he said That which plainly supposes the truth of that doctrine; and thereby hath shewed it. It is a puzzled case among divines, how this argument of our Saviour concludes to prove the doctrine of the resurrection. You account for it thus. “He [Christ] is here arguing against the Sadducees. Now these  
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supported their opinion of no resurrection on this principle, that the soul had no separate existence, but died at the dissolution of the union ; which principle once overthrown, they had, say you, nothing left to oppose to the writings of the prophets, or the preaching of Jesus.—But the words of Moses prove that the soul dies not with the body, but has a separate existence ; for he tells us that God, long after the death of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, called himself their God ; and *God is not the God of the dead but of the living,*” p. 570. That is to say ; all that this argument proves is, and all that our Saviour intended it should prove was, that the soul lives after death : of the resurrection of the body, it seems, it is no proof, but only removes an objection which lay in the way of the Sadducees, to hinder the reception of that doctrine, the separate existence of the soul. That the Sadducees denied the separate existence of the soul, I have no dispute with you ; but how do you know that this was their only objection against receiving the doctrine of the resurrection ? you bring no authorities to prove this ; and if you had attended to the  
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case that gave occasion to this argument of our Saviour, you would have perceived that, in fact, something stuck with them besides this. The argument is thus introduced by the Evangelists. *The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say, that there is no resurrection, and asked him, saying ; Master ; Moses said, if a man die having no children his brother shall marry his wife, &c.* The case here put is of seven brethren who successively married the same woman ; and what the Sadducees wanted to know, and to which they apprehended Christ could give no reasonable answer, was, whose Wife of the seven she should be at the resurrection ? this is certainly a very different objection from that of the separate existence of souls : they might have other objections for any thing that you will be able to shew to the contrary ; but having answered this ; our Saviour appeals to the authority of Moses acknowledged by themselves, —for what ? why to prove the resurrection of the body ; for This, not merely the separate existence of the soul, was the point the Sadducees were now disputing with him. To make our Saviour's discourse pertinent  
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then the doctrine of the resurrection ought to be a natural consequence of the reason offered ; and such, I apprehend, it will appear to be when the reason is rightly understood : the reason is ; that when God appeared to Moses in the bush, he stiled himself the *God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* ; though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had been long since dead. The force of this reasoning will rest entirely upon this ; what God meant when he said he was the *God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob* ? and to clear up this point we must look back to the story of those Patriarchs, as recorded to us in the book of Genesis, where that phrase is frequently used.

Upon God's first appearance to Abraham Chap. xii. God says thus to him. *I will make of thee a great nation,—AND IN THEE SHALL ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED, ver. 2, 3.* This was the covenant of redemption, or the covenant of eternal life to Abraham and his seed. At chap. xvii. the covenant is renewed in these words. *I am the Almighty God—and I will make my covenant between me and thee.—Behold my covenant is with thee, and thou*



*thou shalt be a father of many nations. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee—for an EVER-  
LASTING covenant, TO BE A GOD unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* This is the first place in which the phrase is used; and the meaning of it here plainly appears to be, that God would do unto Abraham all that he had promised. Before; God had said that he would *make of Abraham a great nation*; that he should be *the Father of many nations*,—and that in him *all the families of the earth should be blessed*. This was God's covenant, his everlasting covenant with Abraham. Here; he says he will *establish his covenant* between Abraham and his seed: what covenant? why, *to be a God unto him and to his seed after him*. A most undeniable proof that the whole substance of the covenant made with Abraham is wrapt up in this single expression, that he would be HIS GOD. When God appeared to Isaac, Chap. xxvi. 24. he made himself known to him by this title, *I am THE GOD of Abraham thy Father, fear not*. Why is God's being the God of Abraham offered to Isaac a reason for his trust in God, unless it be un-



understood that in declaring himself to be Abraham's God, God undertook to perform to him the promises made to Abraham? When God appeared to Jacob in a dream chap. xxviii. 13. he said, *I am THE LORD God of Abraham thy father, and THE God of Isaac.* Would you know what God meant Jacob should understand by this declaration? it immediately follows—*thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth—and in thee, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed; and behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land.* Agreeably to which Jacob vows, ver. 20, 21. *If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go—so that I come again to my Father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, i. e. then will I acknowledge the truth and stability of his promises to me and to my fathers.* Take now the expression as \* relative to the covenant, of which it is the substance and epitome, and the connexion will be clear. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been long dead when God spake

\* See Bp. of Sarum on Prophecy, Disc. 5.



spake to Moses. Yet he then declares himself to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ; i. e. the Father of the covenant of which they were still the children ; which shews that the Covenant made with Abraham had not yet received its full and final accomplishment. If God was then Abraham's God, it will follow that Abraham must then have been alive ; alive, I say, in soul, though not in body ; *for God is not the God of the dead* (i. e. of those who are not) *but of the living*, or of those that are. To be, in this sense, is the case of all that ever died ; *for all live unto God*. But if dead Abraham was still the child of the covenant, the covenant as yet must be unaccomplished, and Abraham must have something farther to look for ; which can be nothing but the resurrection : for if the covenant between God and Abraham had its full accomplishment by his entering upon a state of separate existence, this relation to God as a child of the covenant must have been at an end ; as the relation between debtor and creditor ceases, when the debt is paid ; upon which foot God would have been no more the God of Abraham, than of other good men departed



this life, who were received to their reward as well as he.

Whether this account of our Saviour's argument will meet with your approbation or not, I cannot tell ; nor is it material ; for be it as you say, that it proves no more than a state of separate existence, it will prove that Moses hath shewed a future state ; and This, not the doctrine of the resurrection, is precisely the matter in question between us.—But you ask ; did Moses “ cultivate the doctrine of — a future state ? ” your meaning is ; did he urge or insist upon it as an Authorised Minister on that behalf ? this, Sir, is nothing to the purpose ; what this passage is produced for is to prove only that Moses Held Forth the doctrine of a future state ; and this our Saviour expressly says.

To go on therefore to another proof taken from the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 19—31. “ Where the former being in hell desires Abraham, whom he saw afar off in Paradise, to send Lazarus to his father's house to testify to them, and to lead them to repentance ; lest they too should come into that place of  
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torment : to which Abraham replies ; *if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead,*" p. 572.

The single point before us is ; do not these words of our Saviour, taking them with the case with which they stand connected, plainly imply, that the doctrine of a future state was held forth by Moses and the prophets ? you deny it ; and say that " the question of a future state is no more concerned than thus far only, that God will punish either here or hereafter ;" which, according to my apprehension, is equivalent to saying, it is not at all concerned in it : but pray let this case be a little more attentively considered. You observe, very rightly, that " the parable is addressed to the Pharisees" as a check to " their avarice and luxury ;" who are treated as already persuaded of the doctrine of a future state. I will take leave to observe farther, that the Pharisees are here treated as mere Jews, wholly under the guidance of Moses and the prophets, not as now enlightened by the preaching of Christ, of whom nothing is said, and upon



whose authority nothing is laid. The intent of the parable was to admonish them that if they repented not, they should be punished in the next world, as the rich man is here represented to have been; and that if they did repent they should be received to a state of happiness as Lazarus was. Our Saviour, presuming that the Pharisees would not dispute a doctrine received and acknowledged by themselves, puts a request into the rich man's mouth, that Abraham would send Lazarus to his father's house to testify unto them.—What was Lazarus, supposing he had been sent, to testify? a person of ordinary apprehension would suppose it was to testify concerning the state of good and bad men in the next world; and this the following words confirm—*lest also they come into this place of torment*: they were therefore to be thus admonished, that they might by repentance avoid the punishment of the other world: there is no other sense to be made of the passage than this. Now then, Sir, consider Abraham's answer; *they have Moses and the prophets let them hear them*. As to What were they to hear Moses and  
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the prophets? as to the matter in hand no doubt; as to that very point concerning which Lazarus was to testify; i. e. as to the state of good and bad men in the next world. It is supposed then by our Saviour, that the doctrine of a future state was held forth by Moses and the prophets; and whereas our Saviour adds—*if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*; the meaning of this is not, as you suggest the sense of your opposers to be, that the doctrine of a future state “as plainly appears from Moses and the prophets, as if one came back from that state to tell us so;” but it is to foreshew the ill success which the preaching of the gospel was to meet with among the Jews: the belief of a future state was not the point in question; they had received this doctrine already upon the authority of Moses and the prophets; but though they believed yet they repented not; and our Saviour tells them that *neither would they repent though one should arise from the dead*; it is not said, *if they BELIEVE not Moses and the prophets*; but, *if they HEAR not*, i. e. if

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they are not PERSUADED BY what Moses and the prophets have taught, *neither will they be persuaded, &c.* Christ was to be the very person the rich man seemed to desire; *one sent from the dead*; for he was to *die* and to be *raised again*; but to no purpose; since the same blindness of spirit which obstructed the lesser light, would stop the way likewise against a greater. Take the argument in this view, and there will appear a propriety and consistency throughout: but to say, as you say, that a parable which most evidently relates to the state of good and bad men hereafter, and to that only, was intended only to enforce “this truth, that God is a severe punisher of luxury and inhumanity unrepented of,” without view to any special motive to repentance, or leaving it at large, whether those sins shall be punished here or hereafter, confounds every thing. As to what you alledge farther, viz. that admitting the construction of this place to be, that Moses and the prophets taught a future state, it will nothing concern you, because you “may well allow that when the prophets are joined with Moses, and have explained the spiritual



tual meaning of his law, and disinvolved his sense, they *both together* did teach it, and not recede one tittle from your proposition ;” it is a mere subterfuge without any warrant, or so much as countenance from the text. The inference from our Saviour’s words is as plain and distinct, that Moses held forth the doctrine of a future state, as that the prophets did ; that Moses taught it *spiritually* and *mystically* only, and that the prophets, that is, (for this is what you mean) the *later* prophets, afterwards *disinvolved his sense*, is not what our Saviour says, but what you say ; and I will believe it when you have proved it.

The next passage is John v. 39, 40. *Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.* Upon this passage you thus remark ; “ all that this scripture teaches us is, that the Jews thought they had eternal life by the Mosaic dispensation,” i. e. By or in Virtue of Moses’s law ; for thus it follows, — “ For which if our Lord’s word



won't pass alone, we have the concurrent testimony of his apostles, who wrote large portions of their epistles to prove, not only that they thought so, but that they were GREATLY MISTAKEN in so thinking. St. Paul says, *the promise came not By the law—that if righteousness came By the law, then was Christ dead in vain,*” &c. p. 575. That the Jews did trust to the law for salvation there can be no dispute ; but That which our Saviour here expressly asserts is ; that the *Jews thought they had eternal life* [not by the law, but] IN THE SCRIPTURES ; and the question is, what our Saviour's opinion of this matter was. You understand him as declaring the Jews to have been MISTAKEN in this point ; but the truth is quite otherwise ; for, in opposition to their notion, that salvation was to be had by the law, he sets forth Faith in Himself as the only means of obtaining eternal life. *He that beareth my word—hath everlasting life.* ver. 24—*But ye will not come to me that ye might have life.* Ver. 40. In what way does Christ undertake to satisfy them of this ? why, by sending them to the scriptures, acknowledged by themselves, as containing the  
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the covenant of eternal life ; where they would find him pointed out as the completion of all the promises—*they are they which testify of me.* If it was as you say, that Christ intended here to tell the Jews that they had not eternal life in their scriptures, it was surely ! very absurd to appeal to those scriptures as testifying that he was the author of eternal life ; for could the scriptures testify that eternal life was to be had in Christ, if they contained not the promise of eternal life ? is not saying that eternal life is to be had in Christ, itself a promise of eternal life ? it must be supposed then that Christ agreed with the Jews in this, that they had eternal life in the scriptures : and now, Sir, you may be able to answer your own argument. “ The Jews THOUGHT they had eternal life in their Scriptures ; therefore they had eternal life : if I allow this, they must allow me to add another [consequence] therefore the mission of Jesus was intirely vain : as being superseded by that of Moses.” Necessary as this consequence may seem to you, it lies directly the contrary way ; for admitting that the scriptures of the Old Testament do contain the promise  
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of eternal life, and refer to Christ as its accomplishment, it will follow, that the mission of Jesus was absolutely necessary, as That, without which the promise could never have been fulfilled.

The foregoing texts I have insisted upon, as laying a proper foundation for what is to follow ; for I will not say they come fully up to the point between us. All that they prove is that the doctrine of a future state was held forth under the Old Testament, being witnessed to by Moses and the Prophets ; and this we have from the highest authority, the authority of Christ himself. But the question still is, how much of this was understood and believed by the ancient Jews ; and this can never be determined by these passages ; for admitting that the promise of eternal life is there contained, the Jews, it may be said, might overlook or mistake it, as they did many other things. To bring this point then to an issue, the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews opportunely offers itself. You call it, with a sneer, the *PALLADIUM* of the cause ; but it is in truth what you contemptuously stile it : for so long as this epistle holds its place in the sacred



cred canon, the cause will stand firm against all your attacks. We will try this point if you please.

The stress of the argument will lye upon this passage, from ver. 13. to ver. 17. where having spoken of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah; the Apostle subjoins—*these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country; and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned? but now they desire a far better country, that is a heavenly.*

Upon this passage, Sir, I beg leave to ask—Does not the apostle here teach that the patriarchs hoped for a future state, a heavenly country after death? You own it; and indeed it is impossible to deny it, for it is not in the power of words to make any thing plainer. What then do you say to guard against the natural consequence of this; that



that it was the Common belief in those times among the people of God ? why this—" it is evident that the writer of this epistle meant that None but the Patriarchs and Leaders of the Jewish nation saw these promises—because he Confines that spiritual knowledge, expressly to the Patriarchs and Leaders ; and farther assures us that even they had not received the promise, though they had obtained a good report through faith." p. 580.

I wonder where you learned, that the writer of this Epistle CONFINES the knowledge of a future state to the Patriarchs, &c. What you should have said is, that the Apostle hath MENTIONED the Patriarchs and Heads of the people only ; which is a very different thing from confining this knowledge to them. Is saying that the Patriarchs saw the promises, equivalent to saying, that None But the Patriarchs saw them ? If the Patriarchs, in virtue of God's promises, believed a future state, and died in that faith ; the presumption will naturally lie, that they communicated the promise, with the knowledge it contained, to their children and families ; unless good reason be shewn to the contrary. And have you  
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given any reason? Yes; such a one as it is!—“If so, the eleventh chapter directly contradicts all the rest of the epistle; in which, as we have shewn, there are more express declarations that life and immortality was not known or taught by the law, than in all other books of the New Testament,” p. 576, 577. We likewise have shewn how little these express declarations, as you call them, are to your purpose. But what has the law or the teaching of the law to do in a question, which concerns a date of time some hundreds of years before the law was given? is there any one passage in this epistle, which expressly declares, that the doctrine of a future state was not the common belief of the people of God in the patriarchal age? if you could shew such a passage, or any thing that infers it, this would be a proper foundation for your distinction between the hope of the Patriarchs and Leaders, and the popular or common hope; but there is not the least intimation of any such thing, but strong proof to the contrary, as you will see by turning back to chap. iv. ver. 17. already cited; where the reason of God’s  
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confirming the promise to Abraham by an oath, is said to be that he might SHEW UNTO THE HEIRS OF THE PROMISE *the immutability of his counsel*. Will you say that the patriarchs and leaders alone were heirs of the promise? were not their families as much heirs as they? I will trust any man of common sense with this question.

When such liberty is taken with the scriptures; it is not to be expected that the articles of the church should be better treated. In pursuance of the Scripture doctrine as above explained, the seventh article says, that BOTH IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT EVERLASTING LIFE IS OFFERED TO MANKIND BY CHRIST, WHO IS THE ONLY MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN. In consequence of which it subjoins; WHEREFORE THEY ARE NOT TO BE HEARD, WHICH FEIGN THAT THE OLD FATHERS DID LOOK ONLY FOR TRANSITORY PROMISES. To evade the force of this article, you tell us in the first place, that “the Church meant not by these words, that everlasting life was offered to mankind by Christ in the Old Testament, IN THE SAME MANNER it is offered

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or so obscurely offered to the old fathers in the spiritual meaning of the law and the prophets, that though they saw and embraced it, yet nobody else did. This is your doctrine, and you say “ it is exactly agreeable to what our Church teaches in this article.” p. 587 ; but

1. It is not the meaning of this article, that everlasting life was only shadowed out in the Old Testament, by the spiritual meaning of the law ; for the covenant of eternal life was in being many ages before the law was given. To go no higher, it is as old as Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham ; whom I presume the article does not exclude out of the number of the old fathers, but, perhaps, principally intends them. How could these be instructed by the spiritual meaning of the law ? or by the prophets who lived many hundreds of years after ?

2 Because eternal life was offered to mankind in the Old Testament ; Therefore the article rejects the opinion of those who say, that the old fathers looked only for transitory promises. The article very plainly presumes, what common sense must ever presume, that eternal life was So offered



ferred to mankind in the Old Testament, as to be seen and understood by those to whom the notice of the covenant came; otherwise there will be no consequence in saying, that because it was offered, therefore it was believed; and does not this reason extend as well to the children as to the fathers? The covenant pertained to all the posterity of Abraham; to them therefore eternal life was offered; and since the article supposes that the offer was understood by those to whom it was made; the sense of the article must necessarily be, that the posterity of Abraham understood it as well as HE.—You object; if this is the case “then the inference would have been, that ALL THE ISRAELITES did look for more than temporal promises,” p. 588. your meaning is, it would have been *so expressed*: very well, Sir; and I suppose it would have been so expressed, or in words equivalent, if the church had thought that there was any danger that her meaning could have been mistaken; or that any hypocrite should arise in after times, who would want to have it Proved, that if the fathers looked for more than transi-



tory promises, the children were instructed to look for more than transitory promises too ; if you would have consulted the second part of the homily on faith, which is a sort of commentary on the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, you would have found the sense of the Church to be ; that *in ALL GOOD MEN that HERETOFORE have been, FAITH hath obtained the promises of God.* Is not this saying, that *ALL under the old dispensation*, for of *such only* the article speaks, who have been saved, have been saved by FAITH ? of *what* faith does the article speak ? you shall hear. “ Their trust was so much in God, that they set but little by any worldly thing, for that God had prepared for them better dwelling places in heaven.” Again ; “ Although they were not named Christian men, yet was it a Christian faith that they had ; for they looked for all the benefits of God the father, through the merits of his son Jesus Christ, as we now do.” This is the faith by which “ all good men, that heretofore have been, have obtained the promises of God.” And what now, Sir, will you say ? does “ our church, in this article, AGREE EXACTLY with your notion,



tion, that the mystery of the Gospel [the doctrine of a future state] was occasionally revealed to God's chosen servants, the Leaders and Fathers of the Jewish people," but kept back from the people themselves, 'till it was "gradually revealed to them by the prophets," that lived some hundreds of years after ! Give me leave to say, the article knows nothing of this doctrine; and, as if conscious of it yourself, you immediately lay in for another plea to serve you at a dead lift; and go on to add — "whatever meaning the church had in these words, it cannot at all affect our proposition—because by the Old Testament is ever meant both the Law and the Prophets: now I own the prophets gave strong intimations of the everlasting life offered to mankind by Jesus Christ," p. 589. This is a new plea. By your former answer, the doctrine of a future state was only shadowed out in the Old Testament; and this is laid hold of to make way for your distinction, that though the fathers, who saw the hidden meaning, looked for more than transitory promises, yet the sons might not : but now the answer is, that suppo-



sing the sense of the article to be, that the whole body of the people hoped for a future state, still the article will not affect your proposition ; and why ? why because by the Old Testament is ever meant [and the article therefore must mean] the Law and the Prophets ; and your proposition owns, that the PROPHETS gave strong intimations of the everlasting life offered to mankind by Jesus Christ ; i. e. the doctrine of a future state was no longer concealed. But your last apology, Sir, is as bad as your first ; for of what prophets do you speak ? why of the prophets under the Law, who prophesied about the time of the captivity : and does then the article, when it says that eternal life was offered under the Old Testament, and that the old Fathers looked for it, refer only to that period ? look into the Homily and you will see, the whole catalogue as it stands in the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, from Adam to Moses, set down under the stile and title of the old Fathers, as those who looked for more than transitory promises : your answer then, Sir, does not reach to the full sense of the article ; and I am  
per-



persuaded it is impossible for you to think of any that will.

I thought it necessary to connect what I had to say upon your interpretation of the article, with the examination of your observations upon the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews, with which it hath so near an alliance; and by the former part of which it sufficiently appears, that the ancient people of God, *before* the law, lived and died in the hopes of a future state: that the case was the same *under* the law, the following parts of the chapter shew. *By faith* Moses—*refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter, chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season—for he had a respect unto the RE-*COMPENCE OF REWARD. Ver. 24, 25, 26. Having carried his catalogue down to Samuel and the prophets, the apostle breaks off, and concludes at last by saying; *THESE ALL having obtained a good Report, through Faith received not the promises.* They lived not to see the promises Accomplished; but they had firm Belief in them; which was such a principle of cou-



rage and resolution, as made them equal to the boldest attempts, and superior to the severest trials. *Through faith, they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, &c.* These effects are all ascribed to their faith and trust in God; the crown and accomplishment of which was a future state of bliss after death; or, as it is expressed, ver. 35, a BETTER RESURRECTION. You indeed refer this passage to the time of the Maccabees only, p. 580. and true it is, that we find no express mention of the doctrine of the RESURRECTION, as the common belief among the people of the Jews, till that time; but actions will speak men's opinions as plainly as words can; and if we may judge by this rule, there can be no doubt but that a future state was believed, not then only, but from thence upward to the time of the captivity. Then it was that the Jews were called to suffer persecution for their religion; and how do they behave? why with the same courage and constancy that the martyrs and confessors did, who suffered for the name of  
of



of Christ. When Nebuchadnezzar put forth a decree, that all who would not *fall down and worship the golden Image which he had set up*, should be cast into *the midst of a burning fiery furnace*; *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, answered with great boldness and intrepidity, *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us—and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King. BUT IF NOT, be it known unto thee, O King, that we WILL NOT serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image which thou hast set up*, Dan. iii. 5, 6, 17, 18. Their resolution, we see, was not founded merely upon the assurance of a present temporal deliverance; therefore they had a respect also to the recompence of reward. The like constancy we find in the persecution under Ptolemy Philopator, near 400 years after, when those who among them were serious in their religion, chose rather to die than to do dishonour to the law of their God. And who can doubt but that these acted upon the same principles, and were spirited up by the same hopes with those who suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes,



about fifty years after, and publickly declared their *Hope in God* to be RAISED UP AGAIN *by him*? 2 Maccab. vii. 14. Here is a profession of the doctrine of a future state beyond all exception, and that too in the sense of a RESURRECTION; and in this sense the doctrine of a future state was held down to our Saviour's time. What the particular notions which the Jews had about the resurrection were, it may be difficult to settle; some have thought that it was no more than a \* Pythagorean resurrection, i. e. a transmigration of the soul into another body, to be born anew with it; but this does not seem to me to be the truth of the case: true it is, that the Jews, or some of them, did hold the pre-existence of souls, and that they had bodies allotted them according to their behaviour in the pre-existent state; as it seems from the book of *Wisdom*, Chap. viii. 20. *I was a witty child, and had a good spirit, yea rather BEING GOOD I came into a body undefiled?* And this notion

\* Vid. Pridcaux's *Connection*, Par. II. B. 5.



tion lyes at the bottom of that question, which Christ's disciples asked of our Saviour, Joh. ix. 2. *Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* They might likewise, some of them, have believed, that the souls of good men, (which according to the constant ancient doctrine returned to God) might on some extraordinary occasions and to serve some great ends of Providence, come hither again for a time clothed in human bodies; which will account for what we read, Matt. xvi. 14. that *some said of Christ that he was John Baptist, some Elias, others Jeremias or one of the prophets.* But this is not the Resurrection under the notion of a REWARD which it is plain those martyrs believed: nor will the notion of a Pythagorean transmigration agree with the question, which the Sadducees put to our Saviour concerning the woman that had seven husbands; whose wife should she be at the resurrection? The Sadducees, no doubt, objected to this doctrine according to the notions under which it was then commonly received; but if  
the



the Jewish notion of the resurrection had been only a transmigration, they might have answered their own doubts, and needed not to have come to our Saviour for a solution; for in the transmigration, no person being what he was in his pre-existent state, neither of them could have challenged her. The objection will be equally impertinent and trifling upon the supposition of a spiritual angelic state, as our Saviour shews them, and therefore of this it is to be supposed that as yet they had no notion; but if the current opinion was, that at the resurrection every person shall receive a carnal natural body, and appear and be known under all his former relations, there will then be some pertinency in the objection; and that this was the case, the second book of the Maccabees in the chapter above quoted seems to intimate; for at ver. 10, 11, we read that one of the brethren *put out his TONGUE, and holding forth his HANDS manfully said, THESE I had from heaven, and for his laws I despise them, and from him I hope to † RE-*  
CEIVE

† See chap. xiv. 46.



CEIVE THEM AGAIN. And at ver. 29. the mother speaking to one of her sons says, *fear not this tormentor, but being worthy of thy brethren take thy death, THAT I MAY*  
\* RECEIVE THEE AGAIN IN MERCY WITH THY BRETHREN, i. e. receive thee again under the relation of a mother. This supports what the learned bishop Bull hath observed, that the Jewish notion of the resurrection in our Saviour's time was *gross and earthly*; that *they looked indeed for a future state; but a state like unto this present state, where their happiness should consist in the affluence of all things that minister to the body*†. With this account likewise what Josephus says very well agrees||. *The pharisees believe all souls to be incorruptible; but that the souls of good men only PASS INTO ANOTHER BODY; whilst the souls of bad men are punished with everlasting punishment.* What does the historian say more than

\* See 2 Esdras x. 16.      † Felicitatem illam crassam, terrenam, atque ex bonorum corpori servientium affluentia conflata, somniarunt—vitam quidem post hanc felicem, sed huic nostræ similem animo conceperant. *Harm. Apost. Dissert. poster. Cap. 10. § 15.*      || De Bello Jud. Lib. 2. Cap. 8. § 14.



than that according to the doctrine of the pharisees, the souls of good men passed into other bodies? and does not the notion of a resurrection as now explained import as much? for the body which the Jews believed they should receive at the resurrection, though it was a body consisting of flesh and blood as these bodies do, yet it was *another Body*. This is confirmed by another \* passage, where speaking of the pharisees the historian says, *They believe all souls to be immortal; and that, under the earth, there are rewards and punishments for good and bad men; that the one are destined to eternal confinement, whilst the other have the power to RETURN TO LIFE*. What in the former passage is expressed by μετασάινειν εἰς ἕτερον σῶμα, is here expressed by ἀναλίσιν; and both passages taken together shew the Jewish notion to have been this, viz. that the soul never dies, but from the instant of its leaving the body, removes to a place of happiness or misery; that after a time the souls of good men should return to new bodies, whilst

\* Antiq. Jud. Lib. 18. Cap. 1. § 3.



whilst the souls of the bad should remain consigned to eternal sufferings. But whatever the particular notions of the Jews concerning a resurrection were, thus much is certain, that they did believe, that they should live again in the body to be rewarded for their good deeds ; which faith, though erroneous as to the manner and circumstances of the future state of existence, raised as we have seen in those who seriously received it, a contempt of this world, and kept them stedfast in their religion in spite of all the tortures that human malice could invent.

It will now perhaps be asked, whence had the Jews this doctrine ? and I know your answer ; they had it from the prophets ; for from them they had the notion of a future state, as you have often told us ; but with what consistency I cannot see : for if the Jews had the doctrine of the resurrection or a future state from the prophets, one would in reason suppose, that the reception of this doctrine in the Jewish church should have been contemporary with the prophets ; which yet is far otherwise, if your account of things be.



be true : for according to your account it was not known in the time of Ezra, who, as you suppose, wrote the book of Job ; in which, as You interpret, there are as formal declarations against the doctrine of the resurrection as can be conceived in terms. See p. 545. Nor do you mention it as the national doctrine till the time of the Maccabees ; which was above two hundred years after all the prophets were dead : but if the prophets were dead, their writings were extant. — and what then ? is it likely that the sons should have learnt from the dead prophets what the fathers could not learn from the living ? the writings of the prophets were always extant from the days of the prophets, the respective authors of those writings ; and why could not the Jews learn this doctrine from the very first, as well as their posterity at the distance of ages afterwards ?

But since the stress is laid upon the writings of the prophets, I must beg leave to observe, that there is not enough in those writings to justify the character you assign them, of being the first who taught the doctrine of the resurrection or a future state



state to the people of the Jews; of which it seems you yourself was so sensible, that you have not ventured to produce any one single passage in the prophetic writings, as plainly containing this doctrine; and what is surprising, that passage in Isaiah, *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise, &c.* as also that of Ezekiel, *can these dry bones live, &c.* which have a look as pointing at the doctrine of the resurrection (and have by other writers been most insisted on) you interpret as relating to a temporal restoration, and more than insinuate that these two prophets knew nothing of the matter, p. 550, 551. If Isaiah and Ezekiel were unacquainted with this doctrine, it is to be presumed that Jeremiah and Daniel knew as little of it as they; and then that famous text, *Many that sleep in the dust shall awake, &c.* must be struck out too! When therefore, all this notwithstanding, you appeal to the prophets as having opened this doctrine, you should have told us what prophets, and where; for what I can perceive, you have left at most but the three last of them, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi,



Malachi, for your use ; and these, unfortunately for you, say nothing at all about the resurrection of a future state. This, Sir, is the true state of the case. You appeal to the prophets, as having taught the doctrine of a future state ; and yet have not left so much as one prophet, who could or did teach it ! I do not pretend, Sir, to guess at any man's meaning ; and I hope yours is as it ought, and you have professed it to be : but really if your intention had been to expose religion to the ridicule of unbelievers, you could not have taken a more likely method.

But if I may speak my opinion in this case, the origin of the doctrine of the resurrection is to be carried up to a much higher period than the prophetic age. It is remarkable to this purpose, that those in the Maccabees who declare their hopes of the resurrection, ground those hopes expressly upon GOD'S COVENANT OF EVERLASTING LIFE, 2 Maccab. vii. 36. Where is this covenant of everlasting life to be found ? not in the prophets, nor in the writings of Moses, except it be in the Abrahamic covenant : I should therefore think,



think, that the doctrine of the resurrection was the ancient, traditional interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant, constantly preserved and believed, in some shape or other, in the Jewish church. The translations of Enoch and Elijah favour this notion; for they are examples, not of the separate existence of the soul, but of a future life, where both soul and body shall exist together: and if the book of Job be of the date it is generally supposed to be; and that celebrated passage, *I know that my redeemer liveth*, &c. is to be understood of the resurrection, which you must pardon me if I think are not points yet decided in your favour, it will be an evidence beyond all exception, that this doctrine was much older than Moses; and the doctrine could not have been lost whilst the book was preserved. And what is there to hinder the accepting this account? why nothing but this; that we find it no where upon record, that the ancient Jews, before the captivity, believed the doctrine of the resurrection; which is enough, I confess, to raise a prejudice, but nothing more. The author to the Hebrews tells us, that



Abraham offered up his son Isaac upon this persuasion, that God *was able to raise him up from the dead*, chap. xi. ver. 19. and yet of this faith of Abraham the Old Testament records nothing. To come nearer to the case yet; this very history of the persecution under Antiochus is written by two historians, viz. the author of the first book of the Maccabees, and the author of the second: this last writer has recorded the profession of the martyrs concerning their belief of the doctrine of the resurrection; but the first has entirely omitted it; nor is there one word about the resurrection, or a future state, to be found throughout his whole history, though it is certain, that it was now the national belief: so unsafe a thing is it to rely upon the mere silence of historians, when they undertake to write a history, not of doctrines, but of the transactions of men! At the twelfth chapter, vers. 9. we find *Jonathan the high-priest and the elders of the nation, &c.* writing to the Lacedemonians, and saying, *we have the holy books of Scripture in our hands to comfort us.* What use they made of the Scriptures, and what comfort they drew from it, you may find chap.



chap. ii. vers. 49. & seq. where Mattathias upon his death-bed thus exhorts his sons : *Call to remembrance what acts our fathers did in their time—was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed to him for righteousness ? Joseph kept the commandment—and was made lord of Egypt. Phinees—being zealous and fervent, obtained — an everlasting priesthood. Jesus — was made a judge in Israel. Caleb—received the heritage of the land. David—possessed the throne of an everlasting kingdom. Elias—was taken up into heaven. Ananias, Azarias, and Misael — were saved out of the flame. Daniel — from the mouth of lions. And thus consider ye throughout all ages, that none that put their trust in God SHALL BE OVERCOME.* Pray, Sir, consider how this speech agrees with your hypothesis : you suppose that the Jews of this age had just been taught the doctrine of a future state by the prophets, as what was necessary for their support, now that the Extraordinary Providence (as you say p. 440.) WAS WITHDRAWN ; but if this was the case, would it not, may some one ask, have been natural for the old man, who had *the Scriptures in his hands to comfort him, to have*



taken some notice of the prophets, and the comforts by them administered? to have exhorted his sons to have done their best to save the law of God from dishonour; and to have placed their last hopes where the prophets had placed them, in the recompence that was to come? but instead of this, there is not one word about the prophets or their doctrine; not one word about a future state; and the only comfort he gives them, is the hopes of a Temporal Deliverance. If this does not absolutely destroy your notion of the withdrawing the extraordinary providence, with which I have no business at present, it may help you to understand one thing, which is very much to my purpose, viz. how consistent such kind of omissions are with the belief of a future state; and that if the same spirit with which this speech was conceived, the same attention to the temporal covenant, runs throughout the whole Old Testament history, which no doubt is very observable, it can be no argument that the doctrine was not then commonly known; for now at least it was commonly known, if you and the author  
of



of the second book of the Maccabees say true. It is very probable, that the prophets might more diligently inculcate this doctrine, than had been usual in former ages ; which I am inclined to believe, more because the circumstances of the times seemed to require it, than from what I read in their books ; in which, if you take them altogether from Isaiah to Malachi, there is not any thing more or plainer to be found, touching the resurrection of a future state, than is to be met with in the writings of David, and Solomon, and in the book of Job : no great sign that this doctrine received any **NEW** Light in that age ; but, in my judgment, a very plain proof that the prophets took it upon the same foot upon which Moses left it, the common national **TRA-**  
**DITION.** They were ministers of the temporal covenant, as Moses was ; and it does not appear that they had commission to teach it any more than He ; and you see plainly, by what has been quoted from the Maccabees, that religious men in those times founded their hopes of the resurrection, not upon the authority of the



prophets, but, upon God's EVERLASTING COVENANT. This greatly confirms what the learned bishop of Sarum hath said in his book of Prophecy, disc. 5. viz. that the covenant made with Abraham, which God emphatically styles MY covenant, and the EVERLASTING covenant, was founded on better hopes than those of mere temporal prosperity : we see it was understood as containing the hopes of a resurrection in the latest ages of the Jewish common-wealth, and may thence rationally conclude, that it was so understood from the beginning ; for the prophets give no explanation of this covenant, and how should the later Jews have seen these hopes in the covenant, if the sense of their forefathers had not directed them to this meaning, through the common traditional doctrine, which had prevailed in the Jewish church from the very age in which the covenant was given ?

I have gone through the argument ; and it will now be seasonable to do justice to a late learned prelate of our Church, whom you have pressed into your service. Your words are these. “ We have



have at length proved our third proposition, that the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments is not to be found in, nor did make part of the Mosaic dispensation; and as we presume, to the satisfaction of every capable and impartial reader. But to give these arguments credit with those who determine only by authority, I shall in the last place support them with the opinion of one of the most illustrious writers the English church ever produced, the learned Bp. BULL," p. 585. Your arguments, Sir, have been considered; and of their true worth let every capable impartial reader judge; I desire such judges, and none else; but as to bishop Bull's authority, which you now appeal to, it is not for you in any thing that will serve you.

Be it remembred, Sir, that there are two points in your proposition, one in question, the other not in question: the point not in question is this—Is the promise of a future state *any constituent part* of *Moses's* law? it is agreed it is not: here you have bishop Bull with you; and so much the passage by you quoted



does certainly import: but what says he as to the other point which is the subject of our present dispute—Was the doctrine of a future state *known and believed under the law*? Hear him himself in the very next paragraph. \* *Were there, then, any under the law, who hoped for eternal life? I answer: It is likely that the better and more understanding part of the people of the Jews — DID BELIEVE that God, besides those good things pertaining to this life, which were specially promised by the law, would also bestow other good things AFTER DEATH to those who should serve him faithfully. Yea it is ALTOGETHER NECESSARY to suppose this, lest it should be thought that holy and excellent men among the people of God LIVED AND DIED LIKE SWINE. This faith,*

\* An igitur, inquires, fuerunt sub Lege qui vitam æternam sperarent? Resp. Qui meliores erant et perspicaciores in populo Judaico, verosimile est eos—credidisse, Deum, præter specialia ista bona ad hanc vitam pertinentia, & Legibus Mosaicis comprehensa, etiam alia post Mortem, cultoribus suis fidis largiri velle. Imo STATUENDUM ILLUD OMNINO EST, ne viros sanctos eximiosque, SUUM INSTAR, tum vixisse, tum devixisse credatur. Harmon. Apost. Dissert. Poster. Cap. 10 §. 9



faith, which the better sort of the Jewish nation had and trusted to, the learned prelate resolves, partly into the force of God's general promises, partly into the low opinion they had of temporal good, partly into the natural notion they had of God's goodness and the natural bent and propension of the soul towards something better than these perishing things, partly into the examples of Enoch, and Elijah, and partly into TRADITION derived from the Patriarchs; to whom, he says, "God did by many indications hold forth the hope of future good things, and by this more especially, that many who were eminent for their virtues, fell greatly short of happiness in this world." But the place which above all others does most plainly and fully shew bishop Bull's opinion in this point, is in his English works, published by Mr. Nelson, vol. 1. in which he has a sermon upon this subject; the substance whereof I shall set down as follows, viz.

"Good men, even under the law, or Old Testament, looked beyond this present, vain, transitory life, and believed  
and



and hoped for an everlasting happiness in the life to come." To prove this, he produces several passages out of the Psalms and writings of Solomon, and then goes on and says; "good men under the law did not live and die like swine, feeding only on the husks of these earthly vanities, as some have foolishly imagined: they had, undoubtedly, a future state in their eye, and lived by the faith of it as well as we: this faith was first derived not from the law of Moses, for that, in the letter of it, promised nothing beyond this life, but from the gracious revelation of God to mankind from the beginning." To clear this he observes; that "the church of God always believed that God created man to be immortal, and that Adam, by sin, brought death into the world—that he was not left in this sad state without hope, but by repentance laid hold of the mercies of a second covenant—that, when God gave a second law and institution to Adam in the appointment of sacrifices, it is highly reasonable to think, that he encouraged him also to the obedience of it by a promise



promise of acceptance, and restitution to his former favour—that upon this hope he devoted himself to the worship and service of God, and taught his sons to do the like—that this promise made to Adam, and believed by him and his sons, was preached, published, and exemplified by Enoch—that by the faith of this promise the patriarchs did and suffered great things—that it was in force under the law, and continued inviolate and unquestioned among the Jews, 'till after their return from the captivity, after which time, the heresy of the Sadducees arose." Serm. 8.

Can any thing be more plain? In this writer's opinion, you see the doctrine of a future state was as old as the fall; it was believed by Adam and his sons; it was preached and published among the people of God, before the law, and under the law, unquestioned, 'till the time of the captivity. Alas! Sir, the bishop was an utter stranger to your new discovery of secret-keeping among the ancient fathers; a notion! which in the very Latin work from which you quote,  
and



and under your eye when you were transcribing, he explodes, as what he supposed could never enter into the heart of any reasonable creature. You shall have his own words, for they are full to the point. \* *There were in every age, among the people of the Jews men of God, and prophets taught of God, which among so many secret things made known to them, no reasonable person will suspect to have been ignorant of the mystical sense of the law, and to have known nothing concerning a life to come. And since it would be INJURIOUS to those excellent men TO ENTERTAIN A THOUGHT, that they ENVIED others the benefit of that knowledge which they were favoured with themselves, it is*

PAST

\* Floruerunt seculis fere singulis in populo Judaico, viri Dei ac Prophetæ cœlitus edocti, quos, inter tot arcanâ ipfis patefacta, Mysticum legis sensum penitus ignorasse, nihilque de futura vita intellexisse, nemo prudens suspicabitur. Cum autem NEFAS SIT VEL COGITASSE, viros optimos, Sapientiam quâ ipsi pollebant, aliis invidisse, CREDENDUM OMNINÒ EST eos, sicubi idoneos invenerint Auditores, EVOLVISSE iis objecta in lege Mysteria, singulisque tantum aperuisse, quantum captus ipsorum & utilitatis Ratio ferebat. Harmon. Apost. ibid. §. 10.



PAST ALL DOUBT *that wherever they found fit hearers, they OPENED to them the HIDDEN MYSTERIES of the law, and explained to every man so much as was suited to his capacity, and it was of use to him to be acquainted with.*

Again; in his defence of this work, against his *Censurer*, the bishop says; that \* *the prophets who flourished in every age, EXPLAINED the mysteries of a future state, that were hid under the law to the COMMON PEOPLE [Plebi] as their capacities would admit.*—And again; that † *Providence took care that the tradition of a future state, derived from the Patriarchs, should subsist in it's full vigor under the law, and and be EXPLAINED and CONFIRMED by the prophets, which he raised up in EVERY AGE for the instruction of HIS PEOPLE.*

Upon

\* Addo; Prophetas qui singulis Sæculis in populo Dei floruerunt, obiecta futuræ vitæ in Lege Mysteria, ETIAM PLEBI, pro captu ipsorum, EVOLVISSE. Exam. Censuræ. ad Animadvers. 21. §. 2. † Curavit Deus ut Traditio de vita futura, a Patriarchis —derivata, etiam sub Lege vigeret, & Prophetarum CONCIONIBUS, quos, singulis ætatibus in populo suo suscitavit, tum Exponeretur, tum confirmaretur. Ibid. ad Animadv. 22. § 5.



Upon this teaching it is, that he founds the popular notion of the separate existence of the soul after death; which he says obtained amongst the most ancient Jews after Moses; and in reference to this doctrine, he asks this question \*, *to what purpose should the soul remain after death; unless a life either of happiness or misery were reserved for it, according to the nature of the things done in the body?* Directly again, in contradiction to you; who by the mere force of an hypothesis, have been compelled to say, (plainly, as the bishop thought) against common sense, that though the Jews believed the separate existence of the soul, yet they had no interesting speculations concerning it.

These things recurring to my thoughts when I read your book, I stood in suspense and under some amazement, that you should bring bishop Bull for your voucher; who, if by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen that such doctrines would have been advanced, could not more effectually

\* Quorsum vero maneret Anima post mortem Corporis, nisi vita ipsi, sive misera, sive beata, pro ratione eorum quæ gesserit in corpore, restaret? Ibid.



effectually have condemned them! It is very true that bishop Bull does place the doctrine of a future state among the Arcana of the Jews, and speaks of it as brought to Open Day-light in the times immediately following the Babylonish captivity: his opinion (which he took from Grotius) was, that there was a two-fold manner of teaching among the ancient Jews, one suited to vulgar apprehensions, the other to those who had made some proficiency in knowledge; to these latter he assigns the teaching of the doctrine of a future state 'till the time of the captivity; after which, he says, it lay open to all in common. Be this notion right or wrong, for it concerns me not, here is still a fundamental difference between you; for the bishop thought that the doctrine of a future state was in all ages fit to be made known to as many among the people as were qualified to be instructed in it; you think, that 'till after the captivity—it was not fit to be publickly made known; and have therefore limited the knowledge of it to the heads and leaders, exclusively  
of



of the whole body of the people: surely, there is a great difference between industriously keeping a thing out of sight, and industriously propagating it among all who were able and willing to receive it: the first is YOUR Secret-keeping; the last is bishop Bull's; which is just such Secret-keeping as St. Paul speaks of, 1 Cor. iii. 2. *I have fed you with MILK, not with MEAT, for hitherto ye were not ABLE to bear it.*

And now, Sir, what are we to say to these things?—You have given your own answer; and I will report it faithfully.

At p. 476. you had said, that “there have not been wanting at all times men of greatest eminence for parts and piety, who have not only doubted, but plainly denied a future state to be in the Mosaic Religion, though, to be just, with the same obscurity and embarras that others have maintained it.” Upon this passage, in your second edition, p. 479. you have the following marginal note, “To give an example only in bishop Bull, whose Latin words for a future state's not being in the Mosaic dispensation are quoted.

Yet



Yet in an English posthumous sermon, he seems to speak in a very different manner—I should not have illustrated this censure by the example of so excellent a person, had not the indiscretion of a wretched Scribler thus forced it from me.” Who this wretched Scribler is, I know not; but somebody it should seem it is, who has already charged you with contradicting bishop Bull, in the very point for which you have appealed to him as your voucher: and the necessary construction of your marginal note is, that you have indeed contradicted bishop Bull in what he hath said in his English posthumous sermon, but then, that bishop Bull is inconsistent with himself, having spoken in this sermon, in a very different manner from what he hath said in his Latin works; and that it was out of mere tenderneſs to the character of so excellent a person, that you did not observe this before. I wish, Sir, you had reserved that Little mercy you have for those who chance to differ from you in opinion, to be bestowed where it is more wanted; the bishop has no occasion for it; he is



throughout consistent with himself, having constantly maintained, both in his English and Latin works, that the doctrine of a future state was known and believed by the people of God, both before and under the law ; and as constantly denied in both, that salvation was to be had BY the law, as the passages produced do most fully shew. All the obscurity, all the embarrass you complain of, is in yourself, in not attending to these two points, which he has accurately distinguished, but, which you have perpetually confounded throughout this whole question. But if you had known or believed that the bishop is inconsistent with himself, you should have said plainly and honestly what the case is ; or you should have left him wholly out of the question ; for by appealing to him you pretend to lay some weight upon his authority, and hoped no doubt that your readers would do so too, which now, by your own confession, is nothing. It would be well for you if it were nothing ; but, if there is any sense in language, the bishop is consistently against you.

One



One thing more I will beg leave to take notice of, in reference to the sentiments of this learned divine, which will shew, among many other, how little real deference you pay to his opinion, and indeed to your own : it is this.

The bishop, having laid it down that the law of Moses contained only temporal promises and threatenings, makes use of this as an argument to shew its infirmity and imperfection ; in as much as the hopes of mere temporal things not only were not a sufficient foundation for virtue, but were apt, as men might be disposed, to beget a sordid, groveling spirit, estranged from true, genuine piety : for this his Censurer takes him to task, and charges him with blasphemy against the law, and against God. In your marginal note, p. 586, 587. you take notice of this and say, in a decency of language very familiar to you, it is “one of those dirty calumnies which pass from one foul mouth to another ;”—and that “this railer stole it from Peter Baro,” who had rashly said, that “if the rewards and punishments of the law were only temporary, it could not be supposed to come from



God ;” and given this reason for it, that “ if men had no view to any thing but the advantages of this life there could be no true virtue or sincere worship of God.” Upon this argument you remark, that “ those who will talk after him IN THIS AGE must have lost both sense and shame : the true foundation of morality is the will of God ; but is not the distinction between right and wrong perpetually enforced by the law of Moses on this principle ? this then is the spring and origin of all true virtue ; and to give it the greatest efficacy, the love and fear of God is there likewise incessantly inculcated : but how does a long or a short existence, a life here or elsewhere, AT ALL AFFECT the practice of virtue so founded ?” You have taken care of yourself, I perceive, whatever is to become of bishop Bull, who, unless he may plead some privilege from his not having had the benefit of YOUR speculations upon moral obligation, I am afraid will very hardly escape your censure, of wanting either sense or shame. He does not say absolutely that there can be no true virtue where there is no other motive to obedience



ence but what is merely temporal ; but he says what comes very near it : he says there will be no sufficient reward for virtue ; that religion will run very low : nay he therefore insists, that the Jews must be supposed to have had the knowledge of a future state ; because otherwise they must have lived and died LIKE SWINE. If this is an error on the one hand, you are certainly as extravagant on the other, in treating it as an indifferent thing, with respect to the practice of virtue, whether men are influenced by the motives of this world or the next.—But I do not mean to settle this point between you and the bishop: this only I will observe, that whatever there be in this argument, the bishop stands clear of it, but it falls directly upon you : the bishop is clear of it thus, that though he denies the law of Moses, strictly taken, any other sanctions than what are temporal, yet he says, and insists, that the providence of God had provided for the practice of true virtue by other means, i. e. by another covenant subsisting with and under the law, in which the promise of eternal life was contained, and which was by



his prophets, in all ages of the Jewish church, to be explained to the people. This is his apology, and the answer is satisfactory; but this plea will not serve for you; who denying absolutely all knowledge of a future state to the people of the Jews till near the time of Christ's coming, have, of course, left them under the mere sanctions of the law, i. e. under the force of temporal motives only: and whether this be a proper foundation whereupon to lay the whole weight of religion, is not, permit me to say, so slight a question as you are now willing to make of it. If the bishop wanted an advocate, I have told you of a very able one; I mean yourself: for though here you seem to be of opinion, that it will in nothing affect the practice of virtue, whether a future state is believed or not, provided the will of God is allowed to be the foundation of morality; yet in your preface to the Jews, as I have before observed, you tell them, p. 23. "that the Jewish religion MUST want much of absolute perfection, BECAUSE it wants a doctrine SO ESSENTIAL to religion." It is inexplicable to me, Sir, how that should be



be essential to religion, by the want of which the practice of virtue will in nothing be affected ; or why, if the doctrine of a future state be essential to religion, you should only tell the Jews that their religion is less perfect, and not have said roundly that they had no religion at all. You have therefore but your choice of one or the other of these two opinions ; and which will you take ? if you say that the doctrine of a future state is not essential to religion, your argument against the Jews will fail ; but if you say it is essential, you must strike out your marginal note, and Baro's objection will remain unanswered.

I have done with this point ; and if I have not shewn your second proposition to be wrong, you may so far profit by this disquisition, as to be able, by clearing up the difficulties which I have thrown in your way, to shew the truth of it to more advantage. If you are able to do this, in the name of God go on ; TRUTH is what I seek ; and, be it with me or be it against me, LET TRUTH PREVAIL. Yet, Sir, would I not have you suppose, that I have given you or myself this trouble,



only to shew that I think you are mistaken. It is a point in which the Honour of Religion is concerned; in which we are both agreed; but in our particular ways of reckoning we exceedingly differ: You consider the ignorance of the Jews as to the doctrine of a future state, as one of the most MOMENTOUS TRUTHS that Revelation has to boast of; I, on the other hand, look upon it as a DISGRACE to Revelation; as, by the very act of God himself, it shuts out his own chosen people, for many ages, from that single point of knowledge, which could be the foundation of a reasonable worship; whilst, by the directions of his Providence, all the world besides were permitted to have the benefit of it. I am a friend to Christianity, and to all who are able and willing to promote it's interests; and if by any just use of the Mosaic dispensation you can throw light upon the common evidences of our faith, you will deserve the publick thanks. Whether you intend to proceed, or will suffer yourself to be wholly diverted from your purpose by matters of another kind, less  
suitable



suitable to your clerical function, you best know; but give me leave to say, Sir, you are a Debtor to the publick; and I hope that in your next volume, you will make some amends for the wrong you have done to Religion in this; in which, instead of placing Christianity upon a surer bottom, you have only furnished out more handles to unbelievers: for what notion will an unbeliever be apt to entertain of Revelation, when he shall be told, that from the beginning of the world to the appearance of Christ, it's use was to hoodwink infinitely the greater part of those to whom it was vouchsafed, instead of enlightening them? if there is any hope worthy of the attention of a reasonable creature, it is the hope of something better to come, when this vain and troublesome life shall have an end: it was this hope that the heathen philosophers, or some of them, sought after and found; or thought they found; and dim and interrupted as the prospect appeared, still they were glad of it; and received from it great consolation. But the Jews, if you are to be believed, though under the peculiar



culiar care and direction of God himself, had a VEIL thrown before their eyes, to divert the faint glimmerings of natural light, lest perchance it might break in upon them, to teach them (for this, so far as I can perceive, is the worst effect it could have) to worship God with more pure, and sincere affection: for you have told us, as we have already seen, that temporal good and evil, were proposed and dispensed to them, to CONFINE them to the hopes of this world, and to STOP them from looking any farther. Strange! and till now, unheard of, doctrine! do you think, that such an image of revelation as this is likely to cure unbelievers of their prejudices, and will not rather minister fresh offence? If any thing hinders this effect, it must be the absurdity of the conceit.—But enough of this. If the reader has a mind to see another, very strong example of the same sort of management, he may find it in the Appendix.

I conclude this dissertation with giving you one caution; that whilst I am finding fault with these particular parts of your perform-



performance, I do by no means take upon me to decide upon the merits of your General System. What that is, I do not pretend to understand at present; but may know, when you have finished your whole design. If it is your intention to proceed, and it were not too great a presumption in me to offer my advice, it should be, to lay the weight of your argument, not upon this, that the Jews KNEW NOTHING of a future state; but upon this, that THE LAW OF MOSES has made NO PROVISION for it. If this principle is ALL you WANT, it will stand; and you will have nothing to answer for, but the ill judgment of advancing, and taking so much pains to support, another point, with which your conclusion has nothing to do. But if this point must either be made good, or your DEMONSTRATION fall, you are engaged in a very hopeless undertaking: for however it may not seem Clear and Plain, that the Jews DID believe a future state; CERTAINTY that they did Not is impossible to be come at.

*I am, &c.*



I do by no means take upon  
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 neral's proposition. What that is, I do not  
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 ever it may not seem clear and plain, that  
 the Jews did believe a future state; cer-  
 tainly that they did not is impossible.

I am, Sir,  
 Your obedient servant,  
 J. G.



A N  
A P P E N D I X.  
CONTAINING,  
CONSIDERATIONS  
ON THE  
COMMAND to ABRAHAM,  
to offer up his Son ISAAC.



A. N.

# APPENDIX.

CONTAINING

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

COMMAND TO ABRAHAM,

to offer up his son ISAAC.





# CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

Command to ABRAHAM,  
to offer up his Son ISAAC.

 I SHOULD be guilty of a neglect, which you would not perhaps easily forgive, should I omit to take notice of this famous case : and as it has some alliance with the foregoing argument, I should have been inclined to have paid my respects to it sooner, if I had not perceived that the entering into this point, in the body of my work, would have too much interrupted the thread of my argument. What you propose, is to mend the common account of this transaction ; and (as you say, p. 590.)  
“ by



“ by the aid of your interpretation, to give the true solution of those INEXPLICABLE DIFFICULTIES, which have been so long the Stumbling-block of infidelity.” But it appears to me, Sir, that your account hath no foundation in truth; and that in attempting to remove old objections, very well guarded against by the common interpretations, you have raised new ones, not to be answered upon yours.—Let the reader judge.

Your position is this :

“ That when God says to Abraham, TAKE NOW THY SON, THINE ONLY SON ISAAC, &c. the command is merely an information by action instead of words, of the GREAT SACRIFICE for the redemption of mankind, given at the request of Abraham, who longed impatiently to see Christ’s day.

“ The foundation of your THESIS you lay in that Scripture of St. John, chap. viii. ver. 56. where Jesus says to the unbelieving Jews, *your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad,*” p. 592.

As



As this text is your corner stone, your interpretation ought to be very strongly supported; let us see if this is the case. You say then,

1. That by the word DAY is meant the great Sacrifice of Christ; which is thus proved. "When the figurative word DAY is used, not to express in general the period of any one's existence, but to denote his peculiar office and employment, it must needs signify that very circumstance of his life, which is the characteristic of such office and employment; but Jesus is here speaking of his peculiar office and employment; i. e. his office of Redeemer; therefore by the word DAY must needs be meant that characteristic circumstance of his life: but that circumstance was laying it down for the redemption of mankind, consequently, by the word DAY is meant the GREAT SACRIFICE of Christ." p. 593. Really, Sir, I see no manner of consequence in this reasoning: that Christ's day hath reference to his office as Redeemer I grant: the day of Christ denotes the time when Christ should come, i. e. when HE should come, who was to

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be



be Such by office and appointment ; but why it must import also, that when Christ came he should be offered up as a Sacrifice, I do not in the least apprehend ; because I can very easily understand, that Abraham might have been informed that Christ was to come, without being informed that he was to lay down his life as a sacrifice : if Abraham saw that a time would come, when ONE of his Seed should take away the curse, he saw Christ's DAY ; and this, I say, he might see, whether he saw by what act the curse was to be taken away, or not.

2. You are not more successful in your next point. *Abraham rejoiced to see my Day and he saw it, and was glad.*—*ἵνα ἴΔΗ τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμὴν, ἣ ΕἶΔΕ.*—This, say you, evidently shews it [the revelation] to have been made not by relation in Words, but by representation in Action.” How so? the reason follows. “ The verb *εἶδω* is frequently used in the New Testament in its proper signification, to SEE SENSIBLY.”—In the New Testament, do you say? yes, Sir, and in every greek book you ever read in your life. What you should have said, is, that it is so used here ;



here; and I suppose you would have said so, if you had known how to have proved it. One thing needs no proof, which is, that in all languages Seeing and Knowing are frequently used as equivalent terms; Ἐξάυδα μὴ κενδε νόω ἵνα ΕΙΔΟΜΕΝ ἄμω, is an instance you may not have forgot since you learnt it at school. But we have an instance directly to the point in hand. Heb. xi. 13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises; ἀλλὰ πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ΙΔΟΝΤΕΣ, but having SEEN them afar off.* You will remember, Sir, that Abraham stands in this catalogue among the rest; and the apostle says of them ALL indifferently, that they SAW the promises, i. e. THAT BLESSING which was the subject of these promises: how did they see them? by representation in action, will you say? I suppose not; but the apostle tells you how; they saw them by Faith a great way off: and why may not this be all that our Saviour intended? What difference, in sense, is there between saying that he saw the Promises afar off, and that he saw Christ's Day? But if this was all, perhaps you will tell me, it was



a very strange answer of the Jews, *thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou SEEN Abraham?* which, say you, “plainly intimates, that they understood the assertion of Abraham’s seeing Christ’s Day, to be a real beholding him in person.” No doubt, Sir, the Jews answer our Saviour, as if he had said that Abraham and he were contemporaries; in which they answered very foolishly, as they did on many other occasions; and the answer will as little agree with your interpretation as it does with mine: for does your interpretation suppose that Abraham saw Christ in person? no; you say it was by representation only. Nevertheless, upon the strength of these two observations only, you take it up as a decided point, that Abraham was acquainted with the great sacrifice of Christ, and that he saw it by representation. “So far, say you, IS CLEAR, that Abraham HAD indeed this revelation.” I must submit it to the publick, to whose judgment I appeal, whether this point IS CLEAR or any thing like it. But to do you full justice, I will take in one observation more, by which you have endeavoured to  
strength-



strengthen yourself, though it lies a little out of the way, and which relates to the former part of the text.

That Abraham had a general promise, that in him *all the families of the earth should be blessed*, which general promise comprehends or contains the promise of the redemption, is agreed between us; and this general promise, I suppose, might be the subject of the Patriarch's joy. You in favour of your hypothesis suppose that, subsequent to this general promise, Abraham had, upon his earnest request, some special promise made to him of a more distinct communication, of the manner how, and the means by which this great work should be accomplished; and that this special promise was the matter of his rejoicing. "This history of Abraham, say you, has plainly three distinct periods; the first contains God's promise to grant his request, when Abraham rejoiced that he SHOULD see—within the second was the delivery of the command [to sacrifice his son]—and Abraham's obedience, through which HE SAW Christ's Day and was glad, includes the third."



p. 616. The promise, which you say God made to Abraham to grant his request, cannot be the general promise that he should be *a blessing to all nations*; for this was given upon his first vocation, without his request; therefore it must be a special, subsequent promise. But there is no one word in the history of the Old Testament, to justify this three-fold distinction, as you confess yourself; for you say that Moses's history "begins with the second period, and that the first was Wisely omitted by the historian." If there never was any such period, never any special promise requested or made, it was very honest in the historian to say nothing about it; and you will be the wise man, who can see what is not to be found. But what is wanting in history, it seems criticism is to supply: the words in the original are, ἐγαλλίασατο ΙΝΑΙΔΗ; i. e. say you, "he rejoiced that HE MIGHT see; which implies that the period of this joy was in the space between the promise that the favour *should* be conferred, and the *actual* conferring it in the delivery of the command—The English phrase, *to see,*



*see*, is equivocal ; and means either the *present* time, that he *did then* see ; or the *future*, that he *should* see ; but the original *ὡς ἴδεν* has only the latter sense ; so that the text plainly distinguishes two different periods of joy ; the first when it was promised *he should* see ; the second when he *actually saw* : and it is to be observed, that in the exact use of the words, *ἀγαλλιάομαι* signifies that tumultuous pleasure, which the certain expectation of approaching blessing, understood only in the gross, occasions ; and *χαίρω* that calm and settled joy, that arises from our knowledge in the possession of it." Where are your authorities for all this ? you produce none ; wherever you had your Greek, I am very sure you had it not from the New Testament ; where these words are used indiscriminately, to denote that affection or passion of mind, which arises from a sense of blessings, whether present, or in expectation. Thus 1 Pet. iv. 13. *Rejoice* [*χαίετε*] *inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed* [*χαρῆτε ἀγαλλιάμενοι*] *ye may be glad with exceeding joy.* See you not here, the direct



reverse of what you say ? that χαίρω signifies the joy which arises upon prospect, and ἀγαλλιάομαι that which arises from possession ? again ; Rev. xix. 7. *Let us be glad and rejoice* [χαίρωμεν ἡ ἀγαλλιώμεθα] — *for the marriage of the Lamb is come.* where both words refer to blessings in possession. Again, Matt. v. 12. *Rejoice and be exceeding glad* [χαίrete ἡ ἀγαλλίασθε] *for great is your reward in heaven ;* where both refer to blessings in prospect. For ought then that appears from the words, we are at liberty to suppose that the joy which Abraham conceived, was upon the knowledge already communicated by the general promise, not upon any farther communications hereafter to be expected : but what then shall we do with ἵνα ? to rejoice that he might see the blessing which he already had, in the English language is not sense ; I grant it, and therefore our translators avoid it, and render the passage thus ; *Abraham rejoiced TO SEE my day ;* which rendering will very well stand with the Greek ; where ἵνα is often put for ὅτε or ὅτι ; positive as you are, that it always refers to a future time. Thus Joh. xvi. 2.

*The*



*The time cometh THAT [ὅτε] whosoever killeth you will think he doth God good service. again ; 1 Cor. iv. 3. with me it is a small thing THAT [ὅτι] I should be judged of you ; and nearer to the point yet, 3 Joh. iv. I have no greater joy [ὅτι ἀνέω] than THAT I hear, or than TO hear, that my children walk in the truth. And why not here, Sir, Abraham rejoiced [ὅτι ἰδὼν] WHEN he saw, or which is equivalent, TO SEE my day ? there is but one difficulty that stands in the way, and that is this, that according to this interpretation the latter part of the sentence is a repetition of the former. Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad ; i. e. Abraham rejoiced to see ; and then, saw and rejoiced : but such kind of repetitions are frequent in the sacred dialect ; and in my humble opinion it has an elegance here. Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; ὃν εἶδε, ὃν ἐχάρη. He BOTH SAW and WAS GLAD.*

I suppose, Sir, it may now be granted, that it is NOT clear from these words of our Saviour, that Abraham had any such notice of Christ's sacrifice as you contend for : the text may, for any thing you have



have proved, mean no more than what it is commonly understood to mean, viz. that Abraham seeing a REDEMPTION to come through his Seed, rejoiced at the blessing. Here then, Sir, your argument must necessarily have its period ; for this text stands as the FOUNDATION of all that follows ; the tendency of which is only to shew, that, ADMITTING or ALLOWING that Abraham was acquainted with the great sacrifice of Christ,—it is reasonable to expect an account of it in his history ; that—there is no place in the history of Abraham but this, where he was commanded to sacrifice his son, which has the least marks or traces of such a revelation ; that—this transaction stands in the very place where one would naturally expect to find this revelation ; —that this way of information, by action, is agreeable to the method of Providence in other cases, and was most apposite to convey the information intended. This, Sir, is the substance of what occurs between p. 594 and 608 : but all this I must set aside as not pertinent, 'till your first point is established upon surer grounds ; and I will proceed to your objections against the common account of this history.

You



You tell us then, that “ the command as it hath been understood—occupies a place in Abraham’s history that, according to our ideas of things, it cannot properly have : the command is supposed to be given as a trial only ; now when the great searcher of hearts is pleased to try any of his servants, either for example—fake, or for some other end—as in this he condescends to the manner of men—so, we may be assured, he would accommodate himself to their manner likewise, in the most material circumstance of the trial : but amongst men, the agent is always tried before he is set on work or rewarded, and not after—on the contrary—this trial was made after all Abraham’s work was done, and all God’s mercies received—nay what is still more strange, after he had been once tried already—we must needs conclude therefore, that the command was not, according to the common notion, a trial only, because it comes after all God’s dispensations ; yet as the sacred text assures us it was a trial, and as a trial necessarily precedes the employment or reward of the person tried, we must  
needs



needs conclude, that as no employment, so some benefit followed this trial ; now on our interpretation a benefit, as we shall see, did follow : we have reason therefore to conclude this interpretation to be the true." p. 603, 604.

You lay it down here as the common interpretation, that the command to Abraham to offer up his son was given as a trial ONLY ; which is not true ; for the common opinion is, that God's intention in this command was not only to try Abraham, but also to PREFIGURE the sacrifice of Christ. This you yourself confess, p. 612. where you " desire it may be observed in corroboration of your sense of the command, that the resemblance to Christ's sacrifice in all the circumstances of the story is so strong, that interpreters could never overlook that resemblance in their comments on this passage." The resemblance, no doubt, is very strong ; but how this corroborates your sense of the command, I do not see : your sense is, that it was an actual information given to Abraham of the sacrifice of Christ ; but to prefigure, and to inform, are different things ;



things ; this transaction might prefigure, and does prefigure, the sacrifice of Christ, whether Abraham knew any thing about the sacrifice of Christ or not ; for it does not follow that, because a thing is prefigured, therefore it must be seen and understood at the time when it is prefigured : the law of Moses was given to the Jews, and did prefigure the gospel state in many of its appointments, which yet neither was nor could be understood, till, the gospel state introduced, the resemblance was made to appear.

Thus much being observed, to prevent confusion in the question between us, let us now attend to your argument ; the tendency of which is to shew, not that the command to Abraham was not intended as a trial ONLY, but that it could not be a trial at all, UNLESS your interpretation be admitted ; i. e. unless it be admitted that Abraham had hereby actual information of the great sacrifice of Christ ; for you say, in effect, that it is in the nature of all trials to precede the Reward ; whereas you tell us, this trial was made after all God's mercies received, after all  
God's



God's dispensations ; that is to say, upon the foot of the common interpretation it is so ; for if YOUR interpretation be admitted, there will be, it seems, one benefit yet behind which FOLLOWED this trial, and was " the LAST and GREATEST favour ever bestowed on Abraham ;" (p. 606.) which benefit, we are to understand, was the communicating to him the knowledge of the sacrifice of Christ. But how can you prove that, according to the common interpretation, there was no reward subsequent to the trial ? Abraham lived a great many years after this transaction happened ; he lived to dispose of his son Isaac in marriage and to see his seed ; he lived to be married himself to another wife, and to have several children by her ; he had not then received ALL God's MERCIES, nor were ALL God's Dispensations towards him at an end ; and it is to be remembered that it is expressly said of Abraham, Gen. xxiv. 1. (a long while after the transaction in question) that *God had BLESSED him in ALL THINGS* ; which was but the consequence of what God had promised him in the most solemn manner ;  
By



*By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing—that in blessing I will blefs thee, &c. Gen. xxii. 16, 17.* But this is not all. What surprizes me most is, that you should argue so weakly, as if the reward of good men had a respect to this life only. Be it that Abraham had received ALL God's mercies, and that ALL God's Dispensations towards him in this world were at an end; was there not a life yet to come, with respect to which the whole period of our existence here is to be considered as a state of trial, and where we are all of us to look for that reward of our virtues, which we very often fail of in this? You think it strange, that God should give this command to Abraham in the way of trial, after he had been once tried already: he had been tried more than once, if that will help you. “The promise to him, when he was yet childless, his wife barren, and both of them far advanced in age, that his *seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude;*” was, as you observe, a trial of “his faith;” and was it not likewise a trial of his faith and his  
virtue



virtue too, when he was called upon to leave his kindred and his father's house, to sojourn in a strange land? and what if after all this the wisdom of God should have thought fit, that this very man, whom he had singled out to be an eminent example of piety to all generations, should at the very close of his life give evidence of it, by an instance that exceeded all that had gone before; that he might be a patient suffering even unto the end? would there not be sense in such a supposition? But though the common account of this transaction will very well stand with the nature of a trial, it is very fit to be observed that your account of it will not; I mean, in that full extent in which the Scripture sets it forth to us as such; as I shall prove by and by.

But there are other objections besides this. As

1. It doth not appear how Abraham could collect from this transaction, that Christ was to be offered up as a sacrifice. I can easily understand that converse may be maintained by actions as well as by  
by



by words; what you have said upon that subject p. 81. &c. no doubt is very just; and the instances you have produced from Scripture, where actions have been used as foreshewing the determinations of providence, are beyond all exception; but whereas you have considered the action of Abraham in offering up his son as a case parallel to these, it differs from them all in a very material circumstance, viz. that nothing is here added by way of Explanation to shew the import of it. When Zedekiah made him horns of iron, he said,—*THUS shalt thou push the Syrians*, 1 Kings xxii. 11. When Jeremiah was bid to take a linen girdle and hide it in the hole of a rock, &c. the explanation immediately follows—*Thus saith the Lord, AFTER THIS MANNER will I mar the pride of Judah, &c.* Jer. xiii. 1.—9. And so it is in every instance you have produced; which I need not particularly prove, because you have confessed it, p. 609. And no doubt such explanations, attending the transaction, were always necessary for the information of the prophet; because though actions are as expressive of



ideas as words are, yet it is on supposition that there is either common use, or special intimation, to determine what ideas such or such actions import; otherwise nothing can be understood. You will not pretend, I suppose, that by any common usage of those times this transaction was significative of the sacrifice of Christ; therefore there must have been some special intimation attending the transaction, and determining it to this meaning, if it was the intention of Providence hereby to give Abraham any such information; of which special intimation since nothing appears, it can never appear that any such information was intended. The presumption lies the other way; because if any such information had been intended, it is natural to think that the explanation would have been recorded with the transaction, as it is in all other such like cases. But to this you reply, "that the information to Abraham being solely for his own use, and what could by no means be communicated to the Hebrew people when Moses wrote his history, there was no room for that formal explanation, which  
made



made the commanded actions performed by the prophets so clear and intelligible." *ibid.* But this which you offer as a solution of the difficulty, is, with me, a new objection. For

2. If the knowledge of Christ's sacrifice was not to be communicated, to what purpose was it clearly revealed to Abraham? you say, that the Jews "being to continue long under a carnal œconomy, this knowledge—would have greatly indisposed them to this dispensation." p 608; but why was it then communicated to Abraham? for his own sole use, you say; what use? will you be pleased to tell us? was there any good use that Abraham could make of this knowledge, which the rest of the people of God might not have made as well as he? or if it was unfit for every body else, was it not unfit for Abraham too? in short, Sir, I do not understand this doctrine, with which your whole work so much abounds, of revealing things clearly to patriarchs, prophets, and leaders, as a special favour to THEMSELVES, but which were to be kept as a secret from the rest of mankind. I have been used to



consider persons under this character as appointed not for themselves, but for others ; and therefore to conclude that whatever was clearly revealed to Them concerning God's dispensations, was so revealed in order to be communicated to Others. I desire not to be mistaken ; I do not say that all revelations ought to be clear ; which is contrary to fact : It is in the nature of prophecy to be obscure more or less ; but then I suppose that so far as prophecy is obscure, so far it was obscure to the prophets themselves ; and that so far as prophecy was clear to themselves, so far it was their business to communicate their knowledge to others. If you can shew that I am mistaken in this, pray do it, and I shall be obliged to you : but you might have spared yourself in asking another question ; “ why, if revelations cannot be clearly recorded, are they recorded at all ? ” p. 609. If a revelation is not clearly given, it cannot be clearly recorded ; and yet, as you intimate, there may be reasons why an obscure revelation should be recorded ; to wit, for the instruction of future ages, when, the obscurity being cleared up by the event,



event, it shall appear that it was foreseen and foreordained in the knowledge and appointment of God. Upon this principle you must give me leave to observe, that the transaction in question will have the same efficacy to shew “the dependency between the two dispensations,” whether Abraham had any information of the sacrifice of Christ or not; for this does not arise from Abraham’s knowledge, or any body’s knowledge, at the time when the transaction happened, but from the similitude and correspondency between the event and the transaction by which it was prefigured; which is exactly the same upon either supposition.

And now, Sir, give me leave to ask, what service have you done to religion by your interpretation? we were prepared for it, p. 84. by an intimation that something was to arise from it, “to the confusion of infidelity:” As how? why 1st. as by your manner of explaining this transaction of Abraham, you should “illustrate God’s truth, by the noblest instance that ever was given of the harmony between the Old and New Testament.” And 2dly, as



“ by it's aid you should be enabled to give the true solution of those inexplicable difficulties, which have been so long the stumbling block of infidelity.” p. 589, 590. As to the first, the harmony between the Old and New Testament ; the transaction indeed has to do with it, as it is prophetic of the sacrifice of Christ, but your interpretation has nothing to do with it ; because, as has been just now shewn, the transaction will be equally prophetic of Christ's sacrifice, whether your interpretation be admitted or not. As to the second, the difficulties which have been so long the stumbling block of infidelity, which upon the foot of the common interpretation, I suppose, you call insuperable ; I greatly marvel that you should call them so, when you acknowledge in the very same page, that “ the arguments hitherto brought to support the history of this command are of great weight and VALIDITY.” And whether you had owned this or not, I should have taken upon myself the proof, that these insuperable difficulties may be very effectually and substantially removed, without borrowing any aid



aid from your interpretation. The substance of the objection to the historic truth of this relation, as collected by yourself, p. 614. is this, “ that God could never give such a command to Abraham, because it would throw him into inextricable doubts concerning the author of it ; as whether it proceeded from a good or evil being—[because] it would mislead him in his notion of the divine attributes, and of the fundamental principles of morality ; for though the revoking the command prevented the homicide, yet the action being commanded, and at the revocation not condemned, Abraham and his family must needs have thought human sacrifices grateful to the Almighty ; for a simple revoking was no condemnation, but would be more naturally esteemed a peculiar indulgence for ready obedience. Thus the Pagan fable of Diana’s substituting a hind in the place of Iphigenia, did not make idolaters believe that she therefore abhorred human sacrifices ; they having before been persuaded of the contrary.” p. 614. Now, to the first part of this objection you yourself have pointed out a very sufficient answer,



which is quite independent of your interpretation, viz. that Abraham “having had much intercourse with God—he concluded that this command to sacrifice his son, conveyed to him by the like strong and clear impression on his senses with the rest, came also from the same God.” p. 590. No doubt, Sir, this was the case; and no Infidel can deny the reasonableness of the supposition, that Abraham, who had had long communication with God by visible appearances, knew as well and by the same kind of evidence when God spake to him, as you or I know when we are spoke to by a familiar or by a friend. This admitted, there could be no doubt about the author of the command; for though the command was strange, the evidence of sense was not to be disputed: if your natural father should bid you kill your son, or do some other act unworthy a father to command, you would be apt to suspect that he was disordered in his senses; but you could not question whether it was your father who spoke to you, when you saw him before your eyes. Supposing it then to have been clear to Abraham, that the  
com-



command was from God and not from any evil being, what was there in the command that was unworthy of God, or that could mislead him in his notions of the divine attributes, and of the fundamental principles of morality? God is just. It is true; and had not God a just right to the life of Isaac? God is good. Yes; but he is good with wisdom; and could Abraham tell what wise ends God had in view, in demanding Isaac's life? But Isaac was his son. What then? both father and son were at God's disposal, who was supreme Lord of both; and who, as he had a right to demand Isaac's life, had likewise a right to chuse the instrument: as a father, Abraham had no right over his son's life; but as the Substitute of God, he had all the right that was in God himself. But the command was hard. So it was; and so it was intended to be, for wise and good reasons for ought that Abraham knew. As to the latter part of the objection, that from this command Abraham and his family must needs have thought human sacrifices acceptable to God; the revoking the command at last was a sufficient guard  
against



against any such construction. To this you make the unbeliever answer, no; because the action having been Commanded ought to have been Condemned, and a simple Revocation was no Condemnation. But why was not the revocation of the command in this case, a condemnation of the action? If I should tempt you to go and kill your neighbour, and afterwards come and desire you not to do it, would not this after declaration be as good an evidence of my dislike to the action, as the first was of my approbation of it? Yes, and a much better, as it may be presumed to have been the result of maturer deliberation. Now though deliberation and after thought are not incident to God, yet as God in this case condescended, as you say, and very truly, to act after the manner of men, the same construction should be put upon his actions, as are usually put upon the actions of men in like cases. Nor will the Pagan fable of Diana's substituting a hind in the place of Iphigenia at all help your unbeliever: this did not, say they, or you for them, make idolaters believe that she therefore abhorred human  
sa-



sacrifices ; but do not they themselves, or have not you, assigned a very proper and sufficient reason why it did not ; viz. that they had been before persuaded of the contrary ? where human sacrifices make a part of the settled, standing religion, the refusal to accept a human sacrifice in one particular instance may indeed be rather looked upon as a particular indulgence, than as a declaration against the thing in gross ; but where the thing was commanded but in one single instance, and the command revoked in that very instance, which is our present case, such revocation, in all reasonable construction, is as effectual a condemnation of the thing, as if God had told Abraham in so many words, that he delighted not in such sacrifices. This, Sir, is the substance of what has been or may be offered, in answer to the objections propounded upon the common foot of interpretation : let us now see what your interpretation affords that is better.

You say then ;

That “ the command could occasion no mistakes concerning the divine attributes, because it was only the conveyance  
of



of an information by action instead of words, in conformity to the common mode of conversing in early times. This action therefore being mere scenery, and, like words, only of arbitrary signification, it had no moral import ; but the formality of that action, which has no moral import, is seen no way to affect the moral character of the author." p. 617. All this, Sir, is admitted. In your way of reckoning, the command had no moral import; for nothing was intended to be done to Abraham's hurt or prejudice ; who, as you tell us, very well " understood—how the scenical representation was to end ;—and must needs conclude—either that God would stop his hand when he came to give the sacrificing stroke, or that—his son, sacrificed in the person of Christ, was IMMEDIATELY to be restored to Life." p. 619.

This solution, no doubt, clears up every thing as to Abraham, and consequently removes one part of the objection; which says, that God could not give such a command, because it infered a violation of the natural law ; for, as you very pertinently ask ;



ask; "was that transgressed in giving a stroke, whose hurt was instantly to be repaired? Surely no more, than if the stroke had been in vision." Surely no more, than if a king should demand his subject's estate, with assurance to re-convey it again, the very moment it should be surrendered; which every body sees has the shew of doing something, but is in reality doing nothing. But as this solution removes one difficulty, it creates another; which is, that the command will not stand with the notion of a trial, in One point, in which the history itself intimates it was intended as such. You tell us; that Abraham, "in expressing his extreme readiness to obey, declared a full confidence in the promises of God;" which is very true: but you say nothing of his virtue, i. e. of his patience, and self-denial; of which yet this command was intended as a trial. The very words of the command shew this. *Take now thy son, thine ONLY son Isaac, WHOM THOU LOVEST.* Here are two things pointed at, as standing in the way to hinder Abraham from obeying the command. 1. The assurances which



which God had given him, that Isaac should be the heir of the promises; for Isaac was Abraham's ONLY son, not by birth but by promise. 2. His natural, paternal affection. The first difficulty his faith was to remove; the second was to be conquered by his resolution and fortitude. But where, I ask, was Abraham's resolution, if he knew that, either God would not suffer the command to be put in execution, or, if he did, that he should instantly be restored to him? resolution is shewed by bearing hard things; but on neither of these suppositions had Abraham any thing in expectation, by which he could be a sufferer.

Let us hear then, what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says; who best understood this matter. *By faith, Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son; of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting, that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.* Heb. xi. 17—19. It is in the nature of the thing necessary to be supposed, that Abraham was firmly persuaded,  
either



either that God would revoke the command, or, that he would raise up his son from the dead ; for otherwise the promise could never stand : the apostle tells you precisely, which of these he believed ; viz. that it was, that God would raise Isaac from the dead. And this agrees with the character the scripture gives of Abraham's faith ; his believing AGAINST HOPE, i. e. against all the appearances or probabilities of human things. When Isaac was born, he received him *from the dead* ; i. e. from a dead womb : supposing him slain, he believed that he again should raise him from the dead ; and this again was believing AGAINST HOPE ; for one was as much against the natural course of things, as the other : but the apostle does not say, that Abraham accounted that God would raise his son INSTANTLY ; he might, for ought Abraham knew, or had any reason to hope to the contrary, be FOREVER lost TO HIM, though he was assured he could not be so lost as that the promise of God should fail ; upon which foot there will be room left for all that disturbance from passion and natural affection, which every



every father feels upon the loss of a beloved Child ; and consequently matter left for the exercise of his virtue. It suits best indeed with your hypothesis to say, that Abraham believed that his son should be raised INSTANTLY ; for if this whole transaction was a scenical representation, to inform Abraham of the sacrifice of Christ, and if this, (as you say, p. 612.) was the “ principal design of the command,” the information once given, the scenery ought to be at an end. And this is one reason, among others, why I cannot believe your account to be the true one ; because it destroys the force and virtue of the command, considered as a trial of Abraham’s resolution and self-denial ; which nevertheless the very history plainly intimates to us it was intended to be. So that in taking one handle away from unbelievers, you have given them another ; for if upon the foot of the common interpretation, they think they see a violation of the natural law, they may upon your interpretation, alledge an inconsistency of the Scriptures with themselves : and I apprehend, Sir, that it is a much easier thing



thing to shew that the command carries no violation of the natural law, the common interpretation admitted, than it will be to reconcile your hypothesis to the Scripture account of this matter. So much has Christianity gained by your interpretation.

But this is not the greatest difficulty you have to account for. The objection relates not to Abraham only, but also to his family, who, as you have made your unbeliever say, "Must Needs have thought human sacrifices acceptable to God;" because the action was not formally condemned at the revocation of the command. I do think, Sir, that it would be a very considerable objection to this history, if it did give any reasonable encouragement to the belief that human sacrifices were acceptable to God; and I have given my reason why I think it cannot give any such encouragement; which is, that in this case the revocation of the command, without any formal condemnation of the action, is sufficient to guard against any such abuse: whether you agree with me in this principle, or whether you are of the infidel



side of the question in this particular point, you have not told us, nor shall I take upon me to guess: but you are fully persuaded that upon your hypothesis the objection is entirely removed: your words are these. “There was not the least occasion when God remitted the offering of Isaac, that he should formally condemn human sacrifices, to prevent Abraham or his family’s falling into an opinion, that such sacrifices were not displeasing to him—for the command having, as we said, no moral import, being only an information by action where one thing stood for the representative of another, all the consequence that could be deduced from it was only this, that the son of God should be offered up for the sins of mankind: therefore the conceptions THEY [Abraham, viz. AND HIS FAMILY] had of human sacrifices after the command, must needs be just the same which they had before; and therefore instruction concerning the execrable nature of human sacrifices was not only needless, but quite besides the question.” p. 618, 619. I can easily understand, Sir, how the matter stood with  
Abra-



Abraham; and that HE was in no danger of being misled as to the nature of human sacrifices, who knew the secret of the whole affair, and that it was nothing else but scenery: but how this answer will serve for his family, who are to be presumed to have known nothing of this scenical representation, is utterly past my comprehension. I say, that the family of Abraham must be presumed to have known nothing of this scenical representation; because you have told us from the very first, that the information to be conveyed by it was intended for Abraham's sole Use; and I do not see how Abraham could open to his family the scenery of the transaction without explaining the mystery: accordingly your answer in this very passage imports, that Abraham's family, as well as himself, were acquainted with this mystery; for you say that all the consequence that could be deduced from this transaction was, that the son of God should be offered up for the sins of mankind: all the consequence that could be deduced! by whom? why by the family of Abraham; for to them, as well as to Abraham, does



the inference, which you immediately subjoin, belong—“Therefore the conceptions They had of human sacrifices must needs be just the same, &c.” But is not your putting the family of Abraham in possession of this consequence a very plain declaration, that they knew the mystery of Christ’s sacrifice? Now therefore, Sir, take your choice, and give up one part of your hypothesis or the other, as best pleases you; for to hold both is impossible. If you say that the family of Abraham were acquainted with the mystery of Christ’s sacrifice, it will overturn all you have said concerning their ignorance of a future state; for to what purpose the son of God was to be offered up for the sins of mankind, if no life is to be expected after this, it is impossible to comprehend; it likewise overturns the single reason you have given why the explanation (usual in all such cases) to shew the import of the transaction was not added, viz. that it was a point not fit for common knowledge: but if you shall chuse to say, that the revelation of this mystery was for the sole information of Abraham, and that his family knew nothing of it,

it,



t, which I think you must say to make your interpretation good, the objection will lie full against you unanswered ; for upon this supposition they must have considered this transaction, not in your artificial hidden light, but in it's apparent natural light ; and the construction in favour of human sacrifices must have been the very same, as if no such representation as you speak of had been intended.

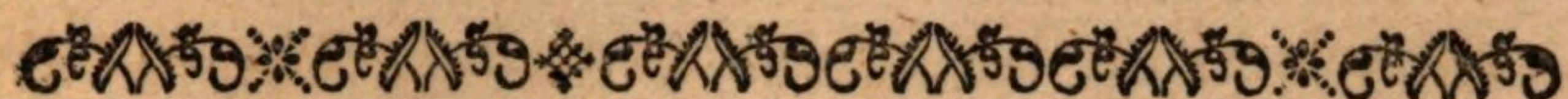
Thus, Sir, it appears that what was well before comes out bad from under your hands ; which confirms to me what I have often thought, that experiments in religion are seldom good for any thing. The truth of this whole case appears to me in this plain light. God called Abraham to this great trial, to make him an example of Faith and Resignation ; Abraham obeys God's call under a full persuasion that his son was lost to him, and yet as fully assured that the promises of God should not fail ; in this view he is an example of Both ; and thus much the scriptures warrant. We, who see the resemblance between this case and God's requiring his only son to be offered up as a sacri-



fice for the sins of the whole world, rightly say, that the one was intended to be the figure of the other; but whether Abraham knew any thing of Christ's sacrifice, or whether he knew nothing, the Scripture is wholly silent; and you ought to have been silent too. It is fit for us to stop where the scripture stops—and let infidelity do its worst.

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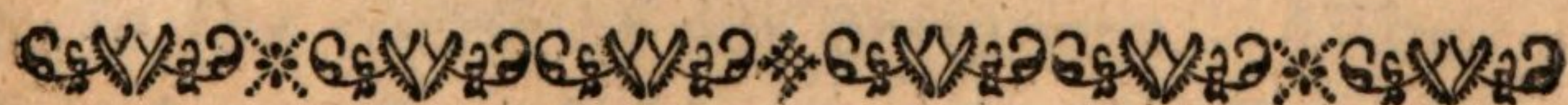




The HISTORY of ABRAHAM, in  
the plain and obvious Meaning  
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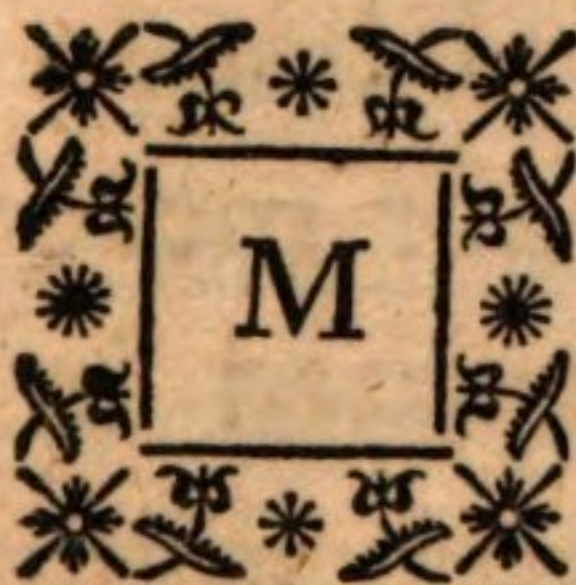
With a Preface on Truth and  
Typical Fulfillment.  
Published in the Year 1740.

By JOHN WATSON, M.A.  
of the University of Cambridge.  
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Sign of the Ship, in Pall-mall.





T H E  
H I S T O R Y  
O F  
A B R A H A M Justified, &c.

 R. WARBURTON has thought fit to slip off from his main question, and to lay out his whole strength upon another point, which was only incidentally brought in, in the course of our argument. Whether the reason of this was, that he thought himself discharged from the main question by his former reply, or that he was willing to quit his first post which began to be too hot for him, and take a new one in which he hoped he might be less in dan-



danger, the reader may judge as he shall find cause. When I published my *Examination* of his *Second Proposition*, &c. I thought it prudent to conceal my name, in order to cover myself from that rudeness and ill-manners, which his treatment of other writers had taught me to expect from him; and in the Appendix and Postscript to the first part of his Remarks, he very soon gave proof that my expectations were not groundless. These hasty pieces are so full of personal abuse, and have so little of true reasoning in them, that I thought the proper way of treating them would be to pass them over in silence; and these Remarks which, though a more elaborate work, are neither more decent nor more to the purpose, I should have treated in the same manner, had there not been some reasons to the contrary, with which the reader will soon be acquainted.

To make my work as short as possible, I will consider Mr. W's opinion upon the case of Abraham as distinguishable into two parts; one common to him with other writers; the other peculiar to himself.

That



That Abraham saw the sacrifice of Christ in the transaction in question, is an old opinion; but that he saw it in such a sort, as to have understood beforehand that the whole transaction was mere scenery, and of no moral import, upon which all the use that he makes of his interpretation fundamentally rests, this I yield to him as his property. As the second of these two opinions presupposes the first, and is grafted upon it, I judged it proper in my considerations to shew the whole to be groundless. I will not dispute the first point over again; for this substantial reason, that Mr. W. has himself given up his main evidence, which is that text of St. John, chap. viii. ver. 56. *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my Day, and he saw it and was glad*; from whence he had inferred, that Abraham saw Christ's sacrifice by a representation in action, and that this representation was the sacrifice of Isaac.

And yet so it is, that there are above thirty pages of critical learning made use of to support arguments, which appear by his own confession to determine nothing!



thing! \* I must therefore desire the learned Gentleman's excuse for not entering into particulars, and shall go to his Peculiar hypothesis; concerning which I need say no more than this, that it arises from no part of the evidence; for were it admitted, that seeing Christ's Day was seeing his sacrifice, it will not follow that he was beforehand instructed that the whole was a mere scenical representation of this sacrifice; for it may be supposed, that after the whole transaction was over Abraham might have been instructed in its mystical signification, and if this be admitted, it will satisfy every single argument which Mr. W. hath brought in support of his opinion. But the strong objection is what I have before mentioned, viz. that upon Mr. W's hypothesis, "the command will not stand with the notion of a Trial, in one point in which the history itself intimates it was intended as such, his Resolution and Fortitude." Confid. p. 163. Does Mr. W.  
grant

\* See Rem. p. 16 to 34, in which there is not a single word which he hath drawn to his own purpose, which he hath not confessed to be capable of another meaning.



grant that this command was intended as a trial of Abraham's virtue as well as of his faith? he does. "I own that the great merit of Abraham's faith implied in it patience and self-denial."\* But he wants to know how he has "lessened those virtues;" that is, how his hypothesis excludes the exercise and trial of those virtues. It is strange he should want information in so clear a case. For "where, I ask once more, was Abraham's resolution, if he knew before-hand, either that God would not suffer the command to be put in execution, or, if he did, that his son should be immediately restored to life?" What had he in either event to fear that could try his patience? Mr. W. hopes that if it may be allowed him, that Abraham believed his son should continue dead for three days, "there will be room enough left for ALL that disturbance from passion and natural affection which every father feels upon the loss of a beloved child." But does not every observation in life contradict this notion? when a father sends a son an East-India

\* Rem. p. 115.



India voyage, does he feel the same disturbances from passion, as if he were to carry him to the grave? I suppose not! a parent will feel concern upon such an occasion; but nobody ever yet thought it an act of heroism; and yet there is always hazard in such cases: but if you suppose that for ought that Abraham knew to the contrary, his son might be FOR EVER LOST TO HIM, this will make it an act of heroism; and this, as I have said, will stand with what the author to the Hebrews says, who does not tell us that Abraham accounted that God was able to raise his son from the dead either instantly or in three days, but barely that he was able to raise him from the dead: but what? says Mr. W. “Does not these words of scripture imply in all common construction, that Abraham accounted or believed, or had reason to hope, that Isaac was NOT FOR EVER LOST TO HIM?”\* I think not: all that they imply is, that he could not be lost TO MANKIND, in whom God had promised that *all the nations of the earth should be blessed;*

\* Rem. p. 120.



*bleſſed* ; for this it was that led the apoſtle to the obſervation : *by faith he that had RECEIVED THE PROMISES offered up his only begotten ſon, of whom it was ſaid that in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called, accounting, &c.* i. e. accounting that God was able to raiſe him from the dead FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT of theſe promiſes. And I apprehend that the very words of God to Abraham do import, that Abraham had no certain expectation of ſeeing his ſon reſtored TO HIMSELF. *Because thou haſt not withheld thy ſon, thine only ſon FROM ME.* Theſe words, I ſay, import, that God looked upon Abraham in this act, as having RESIGNED UP his ſon TO HIM from whom he had RECEIVED him ; which would not have been the caſe, if Abraham had been aſſured that he ſhould be reſtored to him again after a ſhort ſpace. According to Mr. W's hypotheſis, Iſaac, even after he was dead, would *de jure* have been the ſon of Abraham, only lent for a while, in order to give him ſome information, which he is ſuppoſed earneſtly to have deſired ; which will bring this act of obedience in Abraham, which God ſo high-



highly extols, to a very low reckoning indeed, and make it a Blessing instead of a Trial.

Upon the whole of this matter, I think that Mr. W. will find it necessary to give up his new discovery; and either to say, that Abraham in consequence of this transaction saw the sacrifice of Christ, which if it could be proved would do him no sort of service in his argument with unbelievers, or to rest with me in the more common opinion, that Abraham having received from God a general promise that in him *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, saw in this promise the redemption that was afterwards accomplished in Christ, and thereupon rejoiced and was glad. I did always apprehend that I had his permission to say, that Abraham saw the redemption by Christ in this promise: but now, it seems, this point is to be disputed; for he represents me as being more fond of this opinion than is fit, and asks, “If Abraham was ignorant that this general promise comprehended the promise of redemption, how could that redemption be  
the



the subject of the patriarch's joy?"\* And that Abraham was ignorant he undertakes to prove; but, happily for the cause of Christianity, his single proof is not from any scripture authority, but from an observation of my own, which he does not understand. But the best of it is, that he here boggles at an opinion which he has as much occasion for as I: for unless Abraham understood this general promise as containing the promise of the redemption, what foundation can there be for that earnest desire which he supposes Abraham to have had to look nearer into it? I beg he would only recollect his own words, as they stand, Div. Leg. p. 605. "Now the happiness or REDEMPTION of mankind promised on Abraham's FIRST VOCATION to come through him, could not but make him more and more inquisitive into the MANNER of its being brought about, in proportion as he found himself to be more and more personally concerned as the instrument of so great a blessing." What was this promise of redemption made to

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Abra-

\* Rem. p. 29.



Abraham upon his first vocation, but the very promise in question? and does not Mr. W's argument imply, that Abraham understood this promise in the general meaning of it? could Abraham be inquisitive about the manner of bringing about a thing of which he knew nothing? I hope then for the future, that Mr. W. will, for his own sake, forbear to raise doubts upon this question, in which if he differs from me, he will differ likewise from himself, and make his hypothesis quite absurd.

We are now come to the last branch of this controversy, the Use which Mr. W. proposed from his account of this command given to Abraham, which was, "by its aid to give the true solution of those inexplicable Difficulties, which have been so long the stumbling block of infidelity." Div. Leg. p. 590. This was the thing, for the sake of which alone I opposed him. If he had not disgraced the received and approved solutions, but thrown his new interpretation *ex abundanti* into the common stock, I should not have found fault; but when a new set of armour



mour was prepared for us to be given in Exchange for the old, which was represented as worn out and good for nothing, for no other reason that I could perceive, but to raise an idea of his own great importance, I thought it justice to the cause of Christianity, to shew the strength and firmness of the one; and a proper rebuke to the vanity of the artificer, to point out the defects of the other.

I took notice, in the first place, of his inconsistency in laying this charge; declaring first, that upon the common foot of interpretation, these difficulties were Inexplicable; and then saying almost in the same breath, that “he really thought, that the arguments hitherto brought to support the history of this command were of great Weight and Validity.” Ibid.

Mr. W. now pretends that there is no inconsistency in this; a point not at all worth disputing. For whatever is meant by a valid argument, he, it seems, meant nothing at all by this concession; but only “to humour divines like myself\*.” And

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\* Rem. p. 97.



to give full proof that he is in earnest, at least in this, after having very gravely set it forth as “an employment by no means becoming a Christian Divine, to endeavour to shew the invalidity of arguments professedly brought in support of Religion, †” (as if it were so rare a case for men to profess a friendship to Christianity, even whilst they are undermining its foundations) he falls immediately to the work himself, and begins a formal attack upon the common solutions; for which he makes this excuse, that he “must not betray his own arguments ‡.” If Mr. W. wants an apology, this is certainly a very bad one; for if it is unbecoming a Christian Divine barely to object to arguments professedly brought to support Religion, it must be more unbecoming to undertake to justify such objections. But for my own part, I know of nothing that so well becomes an honest man as plain dealing; and since Mr. W. thinks fit to appear openly as an Advocate for infidel objections against the Bible History, I must try the

† Rem. p. 99.    ‡ Ibid. p. 101.



the strength of his arguments. It is necessary to the defence of our common Christianity, as those who think no better of Mr. W's new solution than I do, may receive ill impressions from the weight he has given to the arguments of unbelievers. He thinks me too insignificant a writer to be capable of doing service to Religion; which may be true; but I have not so mean an opinion of him as to think him incapable of doing it disservice; though I hope he will always be incapable of intending it.

To come therefore to the point, since it must be so; the main question between us is this,—Whether this command to Abraham, taken in the common light, would not have “misled him in his notions of the divine attributes, and the fundamental principles of morality,” and raise in him a belief, “that human sacrifices were grateful to the Almighty.” Div. Leg. p. 614. He had introduced the Deists as maintaining the affirmative, for this reason; “because the action had been commanded, and at the revocation was not condemned; for a simple revoking was



no condemnation." Upon this I asked, "Why the revocation of the command in this case was not a condemnation of the action?" and I argued thus, "If I should tempt you to go and kill your next neighbour, and afterwards come and desire you not to do it, would not this after declaration be as good an evidence of my dislike to the action, as the first was of my approbation of it? Yes, and a much better, as it may be presumed to have been the result of maturer deliberation. Now though deliberation and after-thought are not incident to God, yet as God in this case condescended, as you say, and very truly, to act after the manner of men, the same construction should be put upon his actions, as are usually put upon the actions of men in like cases." *Confid.* p. 484. To this Mr. W. now answers, "That the cases are by no means parallel—for that the murder of our next neighbour was amongst all the Gentiles of that time esteemed a high immorality; but on the contrary, human sacrifices a very holy and acceptable part of divine worship\*."

Which

\* *Rem.* p. 103.



Which is nothing to the purpose: for the moral Nature of the Command enters not at all into the comparison, but simply, the natural force and construction of a revocation, considered as relative to a prior order: the revoking an order once given, be the matter of that order what it will, is, I say, in common construction, a much better evidence of a person's dislike, than the order itself can be of his approbation. Nor is this point to be disputed. The cases therefore are parallel, so far as I intended they should be parallel, and so far as the argument requires them to be so. If I could have suspected that Mr. W. would not have seen this, I should certainly have avoided giving him a handle for a mistake which I perceive he is fallen into; for upon this presumption, that the comparison takes in the moral nature of the action, he charges me with having “represented God as commanding an immoral Action;” and yet again, “as it were by an after-thought ordering it to be forborn by reason of its Immorality;” which he says is, “impious jargon—a horrid interpretation.”



tion\*.” The gentleman frightens himself with spectres of his own raising. With all reasonable men I had taken sufficient care to distinguish this from all common cases, in saying that God, as Sovereign Lord of all, had a just right to the life of Isaac, and might take it away by what instrument he pleased. Confid. p. 483. I cannot take away my neighbour’s life by my own will, without being guilty of an immoral action; but I may do it at the command and by the Authority of God: a distinction which the Heathens understood. Nero killed his mother; for which wicked Act, Juvenal says no death was bad enough for him.

He goes on and says,

*Par Agamemnonidæ crimen: sed causa facit rem*

*Dissimilem. Quippe ille Diis auctoribus ultor*

*Patris erat cæsi.—*

SAT. VIII. v. 213--17.

Orestes

\* Rem. p. 104, 105.



Orestes did the same act, but the circumstances differed ; the one did it to gratify his own cruel nature ; the other at the command of the Gods. One thing only is necessary in this case ; to be SURE that the command comes from God : and I thought I had Mr. W's authority to say that Abraham HAD this security : for he gives it as the common answer, in which he seems to acquiesce, that Abraham “ having had much intercourse with God—he concluded that this command to sacrifice his son, conveyed to him by the like strong and clear impresson upon his senses with the rest, came also from the same God.” Div. Leg. p. 590. But as I am now let into a secret which I knew not before, that Mr. W. can sometimes seem to allow, what he does not really believe, only to HUMOUR, as his phrase is, such divines as I am, I cannot be sure that this is not another instance of the same kind of complaisance ; and methinks I see him squinting towards his favourite hypothesis, as if nothing effectual could be done without it, in the following words which are immediately subjoined. “ How rational  
foever



soever this solution be, the Deist perhaps would be apt to tell us, that it only puts him in mind of Electra's answer to Orestes, who, staggering in his purpose to kill his mother as commanded by Apollo, says, but if after all this should be an EVIL Dæmon, who bent on mischief hath assumed the form of a God? she replies, what an EVIL Dæmon possess the sacred tripod? it is not to be supposed." It is to be understood here that a Deist would take this to be a very foolish answer; and so Mr. W. leaves the matter. And it is worth observing with what caution and tenderness he treads, when he comes to resume this point in his remarks. He will not say, that the arguments offered upon the common foot of interpretation, to prove that Abraham could not doubt of the author of the command, are SUFFICIENT; but he says that "IF they HAVE any WEAK PARTS, he shall leave them to unbelievers to find out\* ; which is the language of a man covering himself in the dark, and entertaining sentiments that he does not care to speak out. But as this  
is

\* Rem. p. 99.



is a fundamental point in the debate, it must be settled before I proceed any farther in Mr. W's objection.

I observe then, that unless Mr. W. will admit these two points—that Abraham had sufficient warrant to believe that it was God who spake to him; and—that God had a right to command him to take away Isaac's life; his own hypothesis will fall to the ground. He tells us that the whole transaction was a scenical representation, and had no moral import. Be it so. A man upon the stage may act the part of a murderer; but if he really and intentionally kills, it will be an immoral action, whatever is intended to be represented by it. In like manner, if Abraham had not known that God spake to him, and been convinced that he had a right to make him the instrument of taking away his son's life, whatever was intended to be represented by that action, his very intention to kill him would have been an immoral action. If it be said that God had a right to demand the life of Isaac; but upon condition only of restoring him very quickly to his father; this will be denying that God has an absolute right to the lives of  
his



his creatures ; which I hope is not what Mr. W. intends ; for this will amount to a denial of God's PROVIDENCE, which is a perpetual standing instance of the exercise of such authority. God might have taken away Isaac's life by sickness, if he had so pleased ; and what he might have done by his own act, he might do by the act of Abraham as his instrument. There is nothing in cases of this sort which will infer mutability in the natural law, in any sense in which it can justly be said to be unchangeable. The natural law is in this sense unchangeable, that the same circumstances put, the same relations will arise, and the same duties and obligations will incessantly flow : but where circumstances alter, the rule of behaviour must alter too, otherwise the law would be changeable. If A lends a sum of money to B, during pleasure ; C would have no right to take it from him by his own will : but if it were said that though A should send C to demand the money, B would not be bound to deliver it ; this would be to make the natural law a contradiction to itself : for the first case supposes that every man has a right



right to dispose of his property as he pleases ; the other that he hath not. Nor, again, do cases of this sort imply any clashing or interfering between revelation and natural religion. It is commonly objected upon this argument, that a revelation which contradicts natural religion cannot be from God, which is true, if rightly understood.

As, 1. Suppose any pretended revelation should give out a general law that every man might treat his neighbour as if he had no property, and cheat, and steal and kill, as he thought fit ; it would be impossible that such a revelation should be from God : because the laws of property are suitable to the natural state of man, and tend to the preservation of the species ; a law dissolving property, unsuitable, and tending to its destruction ; consequently, both laws cannot have the same author. But it is a very different thing to say, that in particular instances, and for special reasons of providence, God cannot authorize one man to take away the life or the goods of another : the one case supposes every man to be vested with arbitrary dominion  
over



over every man, by standing, inherent right, which in the nature of things cannot be ; the other reserves the sovereign dominion in the hand of God to be exercised only as he sees cause, which in the nature of things may and must be.

2. When a thing is absolutely and *toto genere* unlawful, God cannot command it in a single instance ; as to be false to one's word, or to his oath. God is himself essentially true, and therefore cannot command another to deal falsely. This would be to be untrue himself : but taking away the life of another is not absolutely and *toto genere* unlawful ; but only as circumstances may happen. A magistrate may take away life in the administration of justice ; by what authority ? is it not by the authority of God, as evident by the natural law ? if then the authority of God, as evident by the Natural law, will justify taking away the life of a man, why will not the authority of God, as evident by Revelation, justify it ? the authority is the same in both cases ; and the manner of conveying it can make no difference.

Taking



Taking it for granted then that Abraham, when in obedience to the law of God he took the knife in hand to slay his son, was engaged in a lawful action, let us now go on with Mr. W's objections. He is much offended that I should say, that "though deliberation and after-thought are not incident to God, yet we are to understand his actions [in suitable cases] as if they were incident;" and that I should "represent God (as if in haste, and before due deliberation) as commanding an immoral action, yet again (as it were by an after-thought) ordering it to be foreborn, by reason of its immorality\*".

You see now very plainly that the argument is wrong stated. The morality or immorality of the action is quite out of the question; as all that Mr. W. says about the commanding an immoral action, and ordering it to be foreborn by reason of its immorality, is his own interpolation, and not my words. All that can truly be charged upon me is, that I have  
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\* Rem. p. 104.



supposed that God is here represented As If deliberation and after-thought were incident to him ; or, As resolving and unresolving. And is not this the very case? God commands and revokes the command : what is this but representing God as resolving and unresolving? Now if the Scriptures do in fact represent God as if deliberation and after-thought were incident to him, why are we not to put a construction upon his actions that agrees with such representations? When God is represented in Scripture as repenting or grieving, or rejoicing, and the like, do we not always put a construction upon his actions suitable to such representations, so far as agrees with the divine perfections? is it not the very intent of such representations to make us conceive something of God, correspondent to what happens in men, who are influenced or moved by these affections? For instance, when God is represented as being angry, is it not the intent of such representation to shew us that, in such cases and for such behaviour, on the account of which he is said to be angry, we are to expect severe  
treat-



treatment from him? When he is represented as rejoicing and feeling complacency in himself; is it not the intent of such representation to shew us, that in such cases, and for such behaviour on account of which he is said to rejoice or be pleased, we are to expect that he will exercise his providence towards us in some beneficial manner? Be this admitted, and it will appear, not only that my answer stands clear of the charge of impiety, but also that no presumption will lye from this transaction, that God delighted in human sacrifices, but a very strong presumption on the contrary; as it always may be more strongly presumed that a man dislikes a thing which he forbids, after having once commanded it, than if he had never commanded it at all.

It will be said, perhaps, that it appears from the history, that God never really intended that Abraham should kill Isaac, and consequently that there is no representation of resolving and unresolving. But how does this appear from the history? All that the history shews is, that God did not suffer Isaac to be killed, but accepted

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cepted the intention as if the thing were done. If the case had concerned a king giving orders to put one of his subjects to death, it might have been supposed that his first intention was that Isaac should be killed, and that he altered his mind afterwards, for any thing that the history says to the contrary : but because it was God who gave the command, we, when instructed by the event that he would not accept the life of Isaac as a sacrifice, collect, from the perfections of his nature, that he could not really intend the death of Isaac : and by the same way we collect, that God can neither repent nor be grieved, nor rejoice, &c. and yet this abates nothing of the construction we put upon the actions of God, in consequence of such representations. After all ; I am not sure that there will not be something in this case that will offend Mr. W's delicacy ; who may think it perhaps as great an impiety to impute dissimulation to God, as deliberation and after-thought. If this should be the case, I must be content ; I cannot alter my bible to please him. But in every shape his objection must end in  
nothing:



nothing: for what construction could possibly arise in favour of human sacrifices from this transaction, when the event, compared with the natural notions we have of the Deity, so plainly shewed, that nothing was ever intended to the hurt of Isaac? It would rather look as a rebuke to the cruel superstition of those times (if human sacrifices are of so early a date) when in the single instance in which God ever commanded any such sacrifice, he refused to accept it. It is thus that this case has been resolved by the learned bishop Cumberland, who says, that “the direct and chief end of Moses in recording this history of Abraham’s trial, was to SHEW that God doth PERFECTLY ABHOR that any should go about to express their affection to him, by offering up the fruit of their bodies, or any man’s blood in sacrifice to him.” How does the case shew this? Why thus—“An angel’s voice is heard by him, forbidding him to do any hurt to his son—and by special providence a ram is caught and substituted in his place: which things being the last issue of the trial, DO SHEW that God’s intent thereby



was to make a SOLEMN DECLARATION that a cheaper sacrifice was more acceptable, &c." Rem. on Sanchoniatho, p. 141.

We are now led to the case of Iphigenia, which M. W. first put into the hands of infidels, and now takes back into his own, with intention to prove, what he expressly declares to be his opinion, that the revocation of the command was "NOT an effectual condemnation\*" of the practice of human sacrifices. In his Divine Legation, p. 614. he had stated the argument thus: "a simple revoking was no condemnation, but would be more naturally esteemed a peculiar indulgence. Thus the Pagan fable of Diana's substituting a hind in the place of Iphigenia, did not make idolaters believe that she therefore abhorred human sacrifices, they having been before persuaded of the contrary."

I desire the reader to take notice that the question is concerning a SIMPLE revocation, i. e. a revocation unattended with  
any

\* Rem. p. 107.



any circumstances to shew the will of God concerning human sacrifices, for SUCH the revocation of the command to Abraham is here admitted to have been : but now the gentleman changes his note, and says, that “the stop put to the sacrifice of Isaac is (in the case Moses puts) REPRESENTED as a favour\*.” You have it again in more strong terms a few pages after : “Abraham, says he, receives the command, and on the point of a performance has it countermanded as a Favour. A Circumstance in the revocation, which I must beg the examiner’s leave to Insist upon, especially when I find him so slippery as at every turn to forget it.”—The reader will soon perceive who is the slippery gentleman, Mr. W. or I. If there was any such circumstance in the revocation, as he pretends, it must appear in Moses’s history, or there will be no foundation for what he says : but is there one word or syllable in the history, to shew that God’s not accepting a human sacrifice from Abraham was meant as a Fa-

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\* Rem. p. 108, 109.



vour to him? The history does indeed represent God as declaring himself Satisfied by Abraham's Intention, of the sincerity of his faith and obedience, which is given as the reason why the execution was stopped. *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, FOR NOW I KNOW thou fearest God, &c. Gen. xxii. 12.* But this surely is a very different thing from representing the not accepting a human sacrifice as a Favour to Abraham, i. e. as an indulgence or exemption from common rules. If this had been the case, the practice of human sacrifices would have stood established by it as the law of God; for exceptions to general rules in particular cases, and in favour of particular persons, are an affirmation of the rules themselves. Restoring then the question to its original state, and supposing (what the truth is) that there is nothing in the history to shew us whether God did or did not approve of human sacrifices, but merely the revocation of the command, the point will be, what is the natural construction of this revocation. Mr. W. says, "it would naturally be esteemed a peculiar indulgence,



dulgence, as when Diana substituted a hind in the place of Iphigenia ; which did not make idolaters believe that she therefore abhorred human sacrifices." To which I have replied, (Confid. p. 485.) " But have not you assigned a very proper and sufficient reason why it did not, viz. that they had been beforehand persuaded of the contrary ? where human sacrifices make a part of the settled, standing religion ; the refusal to accept a human sacrifice in one particular instance, may indeed rather be looked upon as a particular indulgence, than as a declaration against the thing in gross. Not so, where the thing is commanded but in one single instance, and the command revoked in that very instance." What answer have we to this ? why look to the appendix to the first part of Mr. W's remarks, and there you have it in short. " This looks like sense—but it betrays the grossest ignorance of antiquity. At this very time human sacrifices had overspread the superstition of Canaan ; and thence it is that the deists argument receives its force. The family of Abraham, who found the same practice commanded

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him,



him, which they saw esteemed by all the Pagans round about (a practice as appears from Scripture, not positively forbidden, but by the law of Moses) would, in the case put, be naturally tempted to think as favourably of it as those Pagans who understood that Diana required Iphigenia, though she accepted a hind in her stead."

p. 139. His answer in his remarks, which takes up near three pages, being to the same effect, I shall not repeat any farther than to observe, that he here cites a passage from "the noble author of the *Characteristicks*, importing—that it appears that he [Abraham] was under no extreme surprize on this trying revelation; nor did he think of expostulating in the least on this occasion; when at another time he could be so importunate for the pardon of an inhospitable, impious and incestuous city; Insinuating hereby, says Mr. W. that this kind of sacrifice was a thing he had been accustomed to. Now the noble author observes this upon the examiner's, that is, the common, interpretation. And I believe on that footing, he, or a better writer,



writer, would find it difficult to enervate the objection \*."

The reader observes the jet of this argument. I had granted that, if human sacrifices in Abraham's time had made a part of the settled standing religion, the refusal to accept such a sacrifice in one particular instance might have been interpreted as a particular indulgence. To this Mr. W. answers, that in fact this was the case, for that at this very time human sacrifices had overspread the superstition of Canaan; and in proof of this it is that the author of the characteristicks is cited as insinuating that Abraham must have been accustomed to such kind of sacrifices, upon reasons which Mr. W. thinks cannot be answered upon the footing of the common interpretation. Be this then our first point.—Were human sacrifices older than Abraham's time; or were they not? as to the reasons suggested by the noble author, which are the only evidence that Mr. W. has thought fit to produce, they prove nothing; though Mr. W's treatment of that  
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\* Rem. p. 108.



author is a full proof how little he distinguishes persons or things. He had cited this passage before in his Div. Leg. p. 620. and upon it says, “that the noble author—has shewn as much IGNORANCE as MALEVOLENCE, i. e. great ignorance and malevolence, when he supposed that Abraham’s shewing no extreme surprize on this trying revelation was from the favourable notion he had of human sacrifices.”

I do not think that the author of the characteristicks has deserved so well of religion as to be entitled to his complements : but had not Mr. W. been extremely habituated to ill language, the very stile he gives him would have put him in mind that some decency was to be used towards him, in regard to his high rank and character ; but the charge is palpably unjust. The noble author had only the common account of this transaction before him, according to which Mr. W. contends that the objection is right ; and where is the ignorance in not seeing a solution which never entered into the heart of man till many years after he was dead ! does Mr. W. who plumes himself so much upon this discovery, think  
that



that every man was a fool, who had written upon the same subject before him, and did not immediately jump into his sentiments ?

He might have said with decency as well as truth, that the noble author's insinuation goes too fast ; and I can say so as well as he. The noble author says, that, " IT APPEARS that [Abraham] was under no extreme surprize on this trying revelation \*." If he had said, that it DOES NOT APPEAR that Abraham was under any extreme surprize, he would have said what the case really is. The scripture takes no notice whether he was, or was not under any great surprize, and therefore you may give him as much of it as you have occasion for, very consistently with the truth of the history : for it is not necessary to be supposed, that history should take notice of every passion men feel upon trying occasions ; it may very well be left to be understood, that men will naturally feel the sentiments of men. Of no greater weight is it, that we read of no expostulations

\* Characterist. Vol. III. Misc. 2. C. 3.



lations on the part of Abraham in behalf of his son, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah ; for the cases widely differ. God did not open to Abraham precisely what he intended to do with those wicked cities ; but only said so much as was sufficient to let him know that judgment was determined. *Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous ; I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it—and if not I will know.* Gen. xviii. 20, 21. For ought that Abraham knew, they might yet be within the reach of mercy ; and in this case, he might very properly interceed for them. But what has this to do with the case of Isaac, who did not stand as a sinner before God, to be punished for his sins, but was demanded of his father to be offered up as a sacrifice, as an acknowledgment of his sovereign dominion over all his creatures ? Every one must perceive a difference in these two cases ; and that how much soever Abraham's *humanity* was commendable in the one, if he had hesitated in the other,



other, his *piety* would have been less conspicuous.

There is no evidence then from the scripture history, that Abraham had been accustomed to human sacrifices, or that human sacrifices were known in his time. And where next are we to go for proof? Philo Judæus mentions it as the opinion of some, that in the days of Abraham human sacrifices were a very common thing; and upon this hint Sir John Marsham takes up the notion, but, unfairly, omits to take notice, that Philo, in his own judgment, was on the other side of the question. The words of Philo are very express; for he says, in direct opposition to this opinion, that “neither in Babylon, nor in Mesopotamia, nor in Chaldea, where Abraham spent a great part of his life, was this custom known, and that he was ἀρχαῖος, THE FIRST author or beginner of a new and unheard of example\*.” Mr. W. tells us, Div. Leg. p. 341, that “Sir John Marsham has given but too many marks of disaffection to revealed religion.”

\* Phil. Jud. Op. Græc. Ed. Paris. 1552. p. 255.



ligion." I suppose he does not reckon this opinion as one of those marks, because he has espoused it himself. When he has given us his reasons for this, I shall be very ready to pay due regard to them ; but for ought that I can see at present, it is very far from being a clear point from antiquity, that Sir John Marsham, and those that have followed him are in the right : for upon what authority do they build ? why, the principal evidence is from a fragment of Sanchoniatho's Phœnician history, preserved to us in Eusebius, where it is said, that " when there was a plague and mortality, Cronus [or Saturn] made his only son a whole burnt-offering to his father Ouranus." But Mr. W. very well knows that there are writers of the greatest † note in learning, who are of opinion that this story of Cronus is nothing else than the very history of Abraham, intermixed and blended with fabulous traditions; and there is this strong circumstance to support this opinion, that this Cronus, whom Sanchoniatho reports to have sacrificed his son, is also reported in the same frag-

† Grotius, Scaliger, Stillingfleet, and others.



fragment to have “circumcised himself in his privities, and to have forced his auxiliaries to do the same;” which was the very case of Abraham, of whom the scripture says, that he was *circumcised himself, and, that, all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.* Gen. xvii. 27. Besides, who shall answer for Sanchoniatho? that he was some centuries later than Moses, all are agreed; and where he had his materials, or of what credit and authority they were, no mortal can tell. And upon the whole, whoever reads this fragment will see, that it has much the air and cast of a fabulous history; not to mention that there are not wanting men of great learning, who have thought that this history of Sanchoniatho was a mere forgery of Philo Biblius\*. I have no occasion to enter into this dispute; nor will I charge every man who holds the opinion that human sacrifices were older than Abraham, with being dissatisfied to revealed religion. Bishop Cumberland was of this opinion. He makes Cronus to

\* Dodwell. Vandale.



to be Ham ; and upon the strength of what Porphyry hath said, viz, that Cronus himself in this followed an old custom, is inclinable to think that human sacrifices were in use, even before the flood. But it is strange, that if idolatry was one of those abominations which brought the flood upon the earth, the scripture should say nothing of it. It is certain, by the distinction paid to Noah and his family, that they, however, were not infected with it ; and it is not very credible that Ham should himself have been the reviver of an impiety, for which he had seen the whole world destroyed. These are strong objections against this opinion : and yet I think it bears so hard upon the scripture history of Abraham, that every true friend to revelation will desire to see it very plainly made out before he will accept it. Do but remember with what solemnity this transaction is introduced in the book of Genesis. *And it came to pass after these things, that God DID TEMPT Abraham, &c.* Observe likewise the high marks of approbation and esteem given to Abraham's obedience in this case. BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN,  
*saitb*



*saitb the lord, for* BECAUSE THOU HAST DONE THIS THING, &c. What can any reasonable man think? how was Abraham upon this foot a greater example of piety, in respect of his God Jehovah, than the heathen worshippers were in respect of those false deities, who, as we are now to believe, were customarily served by the same sacrifices? nay; how was he not a less? for Abraham, as Mr. W. will have it, believed that his son should be restored to him again; whereas the Heathens sacrificed their children without hopes of ever seeing them more.

I do not wonder, therefore, that those who are for disparaging the scriptures should be fond of this notion; for in proportion to the commonness of the thing, the merit of the action sinks. The learned prelate before mentioned, did not see the thing in this light; but the objectors in Philo (of whom he says, that they found more pleasure in censure than in commendation) did; and ask, “why such encomiums bestowed upon Abraham, as if he had done something new and unheard of before,” when he did no more than



“ what private men and kings, and even whole nations had done upon occasion \* ?” I cannot see but that the objection would be just if it were true. Use and custom may efface the strongest impressions of human nature, as we see in a great many instances ; but to be the first example of such a deed, is that act of heroism which the scripture represents it to be, unless you suppose a man prepared for it by a long and general habit of wickedness and barbarity, which no doubt was what made way for this practice whenever it began, but which is utterly irreconcilable with the character of Abraham in every part of it.

All this considered, I am still more surprized at Mr. W's treatment of the author of the *Characteristicks*, for “ supposing that Abraham's shewing no extreme surprize on this trying revelation, was from the favourable notion he had of human sacrifices, so common among the inhabitants of Palestine and other neighbouring nations.” Mr. W. plainly saw, or thought he saw, the reflexion couched under this observation ; and upon this it is that the charge

\* Phil. Jud. p. 254.



charge of Malevolence stands, or it stands upon nothing. But does not he himself agree with this author, that human sacrifices were common in those countries in Abraham's time, and made a part of the Pagan religion in which he had been bred? and must it not then be supposed that he had, when he was called, a favourable notion of human sacrifices?—Yes; but this was not the cause of Abraham's shewing no surprize—And what if it was not? as Mr. W. has stated the fact, I do not see but that the noble author's account is as good as his. But suppose it were not so: where is the Malevolence to religion in the noble author's account, which is not his own? the sting of this opinion lies here, that it discredits the Scripture history, by taking away the superior merit of Abraham's obedience: and does not Mr. W's hypothesis take it away as effectually? He says that Abraham shewed no surprize, because “he understood the command to be a communication of that mystery, which he had so earnestly requested to be informed of, and that Isaac must needs at length come safe and unhurt from that scenical representation.” How little



merit is left to Abraham upon this foot, I have already shewn; and if Mr. W. does not yet see this case in the same light that I do, as perhaps he may not, he should for the future be more cautious in his censures; lest the publick should be of opinion, that the only point in contest between these two writers is, which of them has been most ingenious in doing mischief to religion.

Mr. W. had a particular reason to have been kind to the author of the *Characteristicks* as, not improbably, he was beholden to him for the fundamental principle upon which his grand fabrick is to be erected, the No knowledge of a future state among the Jews. The learned gentleman has indeed cited for this opinion Christian Divines of great note, such as Grotius, Episcopius, and our learned bishop Bull; in which I am surprized at his great inadvertency (if it is inadvertency). For does not Grotius, in the very passage cited, limit his assertion to the *Diserta Legis*; the things expressly contained in the law of Moses? Does not Episcopius observe the same limitation, and very plainly distin-



distinguish between the promise made by the Law, and the promises contained in the Covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? And has it not been incontestably proved in the Examination, that bishop Bull has granted that knowledge of a future state to the Jews by the Abrahamic Covenant, which he has denied to them by any promise contained in the Law? But in the *Characteristicks* I find Mr. W's principle delivered in the very terms of the Divine Legation; for speaking of the Jewish Religion, the noble author says, that "it TAUGHT NO future state, nor EXHIBITED ANY rewards or punishments, BESIDES such as were temporal, and had respect to the written law." *Essay of Wit, &c.* Part 2. Sect. 3. It may be excused in the noble author, who is to be presumed not to have been much conversant in Theological questions, to take his notions of the whole religion of the Jews from what is contained in the law of Moses; but it is unpardonable in Mr. W. (a divine by profession) to set himself up as the author of a new system in Divinity, before he had taken care to acquaint himself with



the old one ; and I must beg to be excused in saying, that it is a much GROSSER IGNORANCE than not knowing that human sacrifices were older than Abraham ; of which he himself knows as little as I do, though he talks with as much positiveness about it, as if he had lived in those times, and had been raised from the dead to give us information.

But to return ; my main defence is this, that Mr. W. has quite mistaken the force of my argument. If I had said, that human sacrifices were not in use in Abraham's time, the reader sees I should have had great authorities to support me ; but the truth is, I have not said one word about the heathen worship in Abraham's time, nor had I any thing to do with it. Mr. W. had drawn a parallel between the case of Iphigenia, who, as heathen writers tell us, was destined as a sacrifice to Diana, and this case of Abraham ; and his argument from the comparison is, that as in the first case the revocation of the command was not understood by the heathens of those times, as a declaration against human sacrifices in general, but as an indulgence



dulgence in that particular instance, a mere revocation in the latter case could not admit, or at least would not enforce, any larger construction. I troubled not myself with the truth of the fact, which is of no manner of consequence, but took it as Mr. W. had represented it, and thus replied; “Where human sacrifices make a part of the settled, standing religion, the refusal to accept, &c. but where a thing was commanded but in one single instance, and the command revoked in that very instance, such revocation, &c.”—It is evident that the first part of this sentence relates to the case of Iphigenia, who was destined to be made a sacrifice to a heathen deity, at a time when it is admitted that human sacrifices did make a part of the settled, standing Pagan worship: it is as evident, that the latter part refers to the case of Abraham, considered as the worshipper of the one true God Jehovah, who had commanded a human sacrifice in that one instance, but never in any other. What now has the argument to do with the heathen worship in the days of Abraham? or what use can Mr. W. make of it, sup-

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posing



posing it should be granted him that human sacrifices were so old? If it could have been alledged, that BEFORE Abraham was called to offer up his son, human sacrifices had been made a settled, standing part of religion among the worshippers OF THE GOD JEHOVAH, the case would have been full in point; but to say that they were a settled standing part of religion at that time among the worshippers of OTHER GODS, is saying nothing. For be the fact admitted; and let it be supposed that Abraham himself had been accustomed to human sacrifices, whilst an idolater; he could never have inferred from hence, that they would be acceptable to the God Jehovah; for when God called Abraham from his kindred, and his father's house, he must be understood as warning him to renounce the idols of his family. *I am the ALMIGHTY GOD, walk before ME and be thou perfect.* Gen. xvii. 1. Serve ME and NO OTHER GOD. Among the heathen Gods there was intercommunity, each allowing the other's worship; but the true God would have no partners with HIM; and how then should it enter into  
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Abraham's mind that human sacrifices could be acceptable to HIM? because they were acceptable to the idol Gods, do you say? what? because they were acceptable to the Gods whom he had renounced? quite the contrary! for Abraham having renounced all other Gods, he must be understood as having renounced their worship too, any farther than as God by special notice should think fit to make it a part of his own: and so at last the whole must be left to rest upon the resolution of this single transaction, considered as separate from all heathen customs that then prevailed; but Mr. W. I suppose, found it the easier task to raise a dust, and to hide himself under the dark cloud of antiquity, than to come out fairly into the field, and give a proper and pertinent answer.

I have said what I have to offer in defence of the history of Abraham against the objections of unbelievers, and of Mr. W, IN THIS POINT their avowed patron and advocate. And now let me ask him one plain question; will he at last agree with me or will he be on the infidel side of  
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the question? he has given his answer once already—"If this be my alternative, *sit anima mea cum philosophis*, they are much better company \*." What does the Gentleman say? PHILOSOPHERS! how come the Deists, whom he every where sets forth in the most contemptible light, all of a sudden to start up PHILOSOPHERS? are we to expect here another cast of his complaisance, and that he has bestowed hard words upon unbelievers only to humour bigots? This will be a proper question for him to answer: what I observe is, that here is a plain confession, that if he could see this case no otherwise than in the common light, he could not be a CHRISTIAN. Perhaps he may think better of it; but if he still adheres to his new solution, and can reconcile it with the notion of a TRIAL, unsupported as it is, let him take it: I have no farther exceptions against it, as it is now explained; and TO HIM, it will be of the GREATEST CONSEQUENCE. My great objection against Mr. W's account was, that as this information was intended for Abraham's sole use, it left the

\* Rem. p. 127.



the family of Abraham, (that is the whole body of the people of God at that time) under the full force of the common objection, which he had thought fit to represent as insuperable ; for they being presumed to have known nothing of this scenical representation, could see this transaction no otherwise than in the common light. And yet Mr. W. had treated the family of Abraham, as informed of the scenery of this transaction ; for he had said with respect to them as well as to Abraham, that “ all the consequence that could be deduced from it was only this, that the son of God should be offered up for the sins of mankind.” *Div. Leg.* p. 618, 619. This inconsistency of Mr. W. in first confining the knowledge of Christ’s sacrifice to Abraham, and then in the course of his argument extending it to his whole family, I took notice of and desired him to take his choice, which opinion he would stand by. *Confid.* p. 168. He has now taken his choice, and says, “ If by Abraham’s family he [the Examiner] means those who resided with him under his tents, I suppose them acquainted with the true import of the



the command \*." This clears up the difficulty, and I wish Mr. W. joy; but at the same time it opens a new scene, and will enable us to explain to the reader in what condition he has left his main question, touching the knowledge of the doctrine of a Future State among the Jews.

He hath confessed then that "Abraham's family were acquainted with the true import of the command [to Abraham to offer up his son] and at the same time NOT IGNORANT of a future state†."

It is with great reason, that when our author had put the family of Abraham in possession of the knowledge of Christ's redemption, he should likewise suppose them acquainted with the doctrine of a future state; for the first is not to be understood without the second: but the question is, who are THE FAMILY of Abraham; and he tells us, they were those who "resided with him under his tents;" that is, as I understand him, the WHOLE BODY of the people of God in Abraham's time, who all dwelt under his tents;

\* Rem. p. 130, 131. † Ibid.



tents ; which explanation Mr. W. adds to correct a supposed mistake of mine, namely, that “ by Abraham’s family I meant the Israelites under Moses’s policy.” I do assure Mr. W. I had no such meaning ; nor have I so little skill in language, or thought Mr. W. had so little, as to suppose it possible, that when he spake of Abraham SOLELY, he could intend an opposition, not between Abraham and those who lived in his own time, but between Abraham and the Jewish people, who lived at the distance of many centuries. My business was with the family of Abraham in Abraham’s time, to whom, as well as to the body of the Jewish nation in Moses’s time, I supposed he had denied the knowledge of the doctrine of a future state, and consequently the knowledge of the mystery of the redemption. He now challenges to “ name the place where he has spoke any thing concerning Abraham’s family’s ignorance of a future state.\*” And I beg leave to answer this challenge before I go any farther.

In

\* Rem. p. 130.



In his Div. Leg. p. 576. he states the grand objection from Heb. xi. where it is said of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, &c. that *these all died in faith, and looked for a better country, that is a heavenly.* To which he answers; “it is evident that the writer of this epistle meant, that NONE but the PATRIARCHS, and LEADERS of the Jewish people saw these promises, &c. because he CONFINES that spiritual knowledge expressly to the PATRIARCHS and LEADERS.” p. 580. The Leaders of the Jewish people stand plainly distinguished from the people of the Jews; and is it not as natural to suppose that the Patriarchs are mentioned as distinguished from the people of God? again, p. 587. “The mystery of the gospel was Occasionally revealed to God’s chosen Servants, the Leaders and Fathers of the Jewish people, and the dawning of it gradually revealed to the People, by the prophets.” Here again the Leaders and Fathers, as distinguished from the People, are mentioned as the CHOSEN Servants of God to whom alone the knowledge of a future state was communicated.



cated. Again; the 7th article of the Church of England says, that *the* OLD FATHERS *did* look for more than transitory promises. Yes, says M. W. “but was the sense in question true, then the inference had been, that ALL THE ISRAELITES did look for more than temporary promises.” p. 588. Is not this declaring the question to be whether the Israelites, as they stand distinguished from the old Fathers, did look for more than transitory promises? and does not this passage therefore amount to a Denial that they did? once more, p. 477. “The more current doctrine has always been, that a future state—was taught by the law of Moses.” To the support of which notion, he says several prejudices concurred, one of which is this, that whereas “several Patriarchs and Prophets, both before and under the Mosaic dispensation, were certainly favoured with the revelation of Man’s redemption, in which the doctrine of a future state was so eminently contained, it seemed utterly incredible that these should not have conveyed it to their POSTERITY and PEOPLE.” The objection is material enough, and Mr. W. does



W. does not so much as attempt to give it an answer : but the objection, as here stated by himself, lies against the credibility of supposing, that the patriarchs BEFORE the law should not have communicated this doctrine to their POSTERITY ; and what account can be given of his stating the objection in this manner but this, that they did Not communicate it to their POSTERITY ? surely if he had made any distinction in this respect, between the people of God before the law, and the people of God under the law, now had been his proper time to have taken notice of it : but it is remarkable, that neither here, nor in any other part of his work, is there the least hint or intimation of such distinction, till he came to be pressed with difficulties. Add now to all this, that the author's general declaration, that the information was intended for Abraham's Sole Use, and I think it will no longer bear any dispute, that in his original plan the body of the people in all ages, as distinguished from the patriarchs and leaders, stood excluded from the knowledge of a future state, till it was opened by the prophets about the  
time



time of the captivity : but he now finds cause to depart from his first principles, as he has done in other instances besides, and I hope will do so in many more ; but then let him do it honestly and ingenuously, and not tax me with falshood for charging him with what his books will warrant : he has not said, *totidem verbis*, that Abraham's family knew nothing of a future state ; but he hath said that which implies it.

Let us now take the gentleman upon his second thought, and see in what light his argument will appear. It is confessed that Isaac, as one of Abraham's family, knew the doctrine of a future state ; and for the same reasons that Abraham taught this doctrine to his family, it is to be presumed that Isaac taught it to his : now Isaac lived within about ten years of Jacob's going with all his family into Egypt ; and Jacob lived after this near twenty years : so that, taking it for granted that this doctrine continued among the posterity of Abraham during the lives of the patriarchs themselves, there will remain scarce two hundred years from hence till the coming  
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of Moses, for the wearing out of this doctrine, and that too in a country where he acknowledges it was received and inculcated. Mr. W. taxes me with concluding, that “ what Abraham’s family once knew, their posterity could never forget\*.” I have concluded no such thing ; I only desire it may be admitted as highly probable, or at least very credible, that the doctrine of a future state, once established in the family of Abraham, might be transmitted down to the time of Moses : and if he will deny this, let him tell me how it comes to pass, that in all countries in the world opinions and customs, and even common sayings, are handed down from one generation of men to another for a longer period of time. This doctrine has the advantage above many other opinions in this respect, that it is of the last importance ; it was the foundation of the religion of their posterity in Egypt, if they had any ; and that they had religion the Old Testament shews. Mr. W. says indeed, that “ the written word tells us, that

\* Rem. p. 131.



that when Moses was sent to redeem this posterity from bondage, they remembered so little of God's revelations to their forefathers, that they knew nothing even of his nature \*." What can he mean by this? all that is true is, that they had learned idol worship; but with their idols, as Mr. W. himself has elsewhere † acknowledged, they worshipped the God of their fathers; and it appears from the style in which Moses addresses himself to them, *Exod. iii. 6, 15.* Upon what was this worship founded? upon the temporal covenant it could not be, which was not yet brought to execution; and if they had no notion of a future state neither, their religion then was absolutely without foundation.

Thus then at last the argument stands. Mr. W. is to DEMONSTRATE (mind the word) the Divine Legation of Moses from the No Knowledge of a future state among the Jews. This he is again to prove from hence, that Moses Taught no such doctrine. Admitting the last proposition,

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position,

\* *Rem. p. 131.* † *Div. Leg. p. 393.*



position, the whole weight of the demonstration must rest upon the connection there is between Moses's Not Teaching this doctrine, and the people's Not Knowing it : but if any probable account can be given how the people might know it, though Moses did not teach it, there will be no connexion, or no necessary connexion. Now Mr. W. acknowledges, that in the time of Abraham that doctrine was the belief of the people of God ; whence a very probable evidence arises, that his posterity were in possession of it when Moses came to bring them out of Egypt. Therefore the DEMONSTRATION falls to the ground.

This will be the true account of the case, supposing the argument truly stated : but this Mr. W. now thinks fit to deny. In the close of my Examination, p. 453. I presumed to give him this advice ; that “ if his intention was to proceed, he should lay the weight of his argument not upon this, that the Jews KNEW NOTHING of a future state ; but upon this, that THE LAW OF MOSES has made NO PROVISION for it.” and said, “ if this  
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principle is ALL you WANT, it will STAND." To this he replies; "What he GRANTS is ALL I WANT." Append. p. 140. The same answer is repeated in his last Remarks, where he says, that "by owning that Moses did not teach a future state of rewards and punishments, I have allowed ALL he WANTED, to make his argument demonstrative\*."

I desire the reader to take this thing right. That Moses did not teach a future state, meaning that he did not give such notices of it as were sufficient to shew his own belief of it, and to commend it as a doctrine fit to be received by the Jewish nation, I never did say, but have constantly maintained the contrary; but this I have said, that the doctrine of a future state was no Constituent Part of the law of Moses, and that he did not teach it as a doctrine Properly Appertaining to his Commission; still insisting that this doctrine was Generally Received among the Jews when Moses brought them out of Egypt, in consequence of a Prior revelation sub-

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\* Pref. p. 11, 12.



sisting among the patriarchs and their posterity from Adam down to the time of Moses; and this latter point makes the main substance of the Examination. What now says Mr. W.? why, in effect, you see he tells us, that this latter point has nothing to do with the argument, and that it is enough to make his Demonstration good, that the doctrine of a future state has no place in the body of Moses's laws. If this is the case, I will give up the Examination as one entire impertinency; for which however there will be this excuse, that it is only one impertinency for another; for as this latter point is the whole subject of the Examination, so it makes the principal figure in the second part of the second volume of the Divine Legation. But to what purpose, one may reasonably ask, was it even mentioned, if it had nothing to do with the argument? Mr. W. felt the objection very sensibly, and thus replies to it—"It was out of my observance to truth\*;" which would have been just as good a reason if he had written against  
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\* Rem. Pref. p. 12.



purgatory or transubstantiation, or the Pope's infallibility. Go to Append. p. 141, 142. and you will find him improving upon you. "Though this principle that the law of Moses made no provision for a future state be all I want, to support my demonstration, yet I mean to secure it with this other, that the body of the Jews for some ages knew nothing of it. This I should do were it for nothing else, but that it is a truth Offensive to Bigots, and Their Systems." The gentleman, it seems, does not so much consider what is proper and pertinent to his argument, as how he may give offence to his readers; in which he may rest himself assured that he has succeeded to the utmost of his wishes: but let me ask this observer of truth and decency; does not this very principle that he would now discharge from his service, because he finds, I suppose, that he cannot keep it, stand in his argument of the latest edition, as drawn up by himself? See!

"Whatsoever religion and society Have  
No future state for their support, must be  
supported by an extraordinary providence.



The Jewish religion and society Had No future state for their support, &c." Rem. Par. 1. p. 78.

Say now, that the body of the Jewish nation in Moses's time did believe the doctrine of a future state; and I will then ask any man of common understanding, whether it can consistently be maintained, that the Jewish religion and society HAD NO future state for their support. In what other sense HAS any society the doctrine of a future state for its support, than as it is a doctrine received and acknowledged by the members constituting such a society? if the Jews did believe the doctrine of a future state, it must have made a part of their religion, from whomsoever they had it; and it would have had the same effect in the Jewish state that it has in all other states and kingdoms in the world: since then, in the author's own account, his argument requires him to say, that the Jews in Moses's time did not believe a future state, it is absurd and contradictory to affirm, that it will be secured by the single supposition, that the doctrine  
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of a future state was no Constituent Part of the law of Moses.

But if Mr. W. will still insist that this principle is all he wants, I hope he will shew us the connexion between these two propositions — “The doctrine of a future state is no constituent part of the law of Moses — therefore Moses’s Legation was divine.” If this is right reasoning, it will prove, so far as I can perceive, the divine Legation of all the sovereign princes in the world : for though the doctrine of a future state may be received in all nations and is received, at least in all civilized nations, it enters not into the civil constitution of any ; it is a general principle which government presupposes ; and when any religion is founded upon this principle, as some always must, that religion may be provided for by laws. So it is in all Christian countries ; and so it was under Moses’s administration, who found the Israelites in possession of a religion, to which if new external rites were added, yet the whole stood upon the old foundation, the Covenant which God had made with their fathers, which  
I say,



I say, and which Mr. W. now permits me to say, was then understood as containing the hope of a future state. To what end then should Moses enter this doctrine into the body of his laws, when it lay at the bottom of the common religion then in use; or what evidence can possibly arise from its being not entered, to prove his legation to be divine?

Let the gentleman himself be heard as to this point, who thus attempts to explain it, Append. p. 140. "If Moses would leave his people to get or to keep a doctrine as they could, so necessary, and believed by him to be so necessary under an ordinary providence to religion and society, we must needs conclude he was well assured, that his institution could do without it; or in other words, that the defect would be supplied by the administration of an Extraordinary Providence." This is brought directly to shew that *what I grant* (viz. that the doctrine of a future state was no constituent part of Moses's law) *is all he wants*, to make the demonstration good; and it is the only place that occurs where he has endeavoured to  
shew



shew it, though it is not the only place where he has asserted it. But what does he mean by Moses's leaving it to his people to Get this doctrine as they could? the argument supposes that they had it; and it is upon this supposition that I have now his leave to reason; for he says he has no occasion to insist upon the contrary. Strike this out then, and let us suppose him only to say, "If Moses would leave his people to Keep a doctrine As They Could, so necessary, &c. we must needs conclude, &c." What is this leaving the people As They Could? if it means any thing, it must be, that unless Moses had entered the doctrine of a future state into the body of his laws, there would have been great danger of its being lost among the Jews, which is just as good sense as if I should say, that because this doctrine is not entered in Magna Charta, or in the Statutes of the realm, therefore there is danger of its being lost among the people of England. The doctrine of a future state cannot be lost in England, or any where else, so long as Christianity is preserved, and for this the civil laws of all Christian countries  
make



make provision. In like manner, supposing the Jews to have believed the doctrine of a future state when Moses came, as being contained in the religion then received and delivered down to them from their forefathers, it was impossible they should lose that doctrine whilst they preserved their religion, and the preservation of this was the grand design of Moses's whole œconomy : it is therefore a ridiculous inference to say, that because Moses did not enter this doctrine into the body of his laws, therefore he was well assured, that his institution would do without it, or that there could be any such defect (so far as this doctrine would be of use to him) as would want to be supplied by the administration of an extraordinary providence. But if you say, and can prove it too, that the Jews in fact Had Not the doctrine of a future state, this indeed will be a plea that an extraordinary providence was necessary to supply the want of it, and that Moses, when he undertook the government, was well assured, that he should be extraordinarily supported : and this, at last, is the bottom upon which Mr. W's demonstration



tion must stand, or it can stand upon nothing.

I trust I shall not be understood as denying that an extraordinary providence was administered under Moses's government; but only that this argument will not prove it; which I should not have thought needed caution, if Mr. W. had not told me that "I have given no obscure intimation up and down my pamphlet [meaning the Examination] that I believe nothing of the matter\*." This is like the rest of his honest dealing. I challenge him to produce the passages, and when he has done it, he shall know what I have farther to say to him. In the mean time, I desire the reader to consider what it was that Moses undertook, and what was the true end of his mission: it was to carry the children of Israel out of Egypt, and put them in possession of the land of Canaan, in execution of the covenant made with Abraham. The work, in the very nature of it, Required the administration of an extraordinary providence, of which it ought there-

\* Append. p. 144.



therefore to be presumed, that Moses had both the assurance and experience; otherwise he would have engaged in a very mad undertaking, and the people would have been as mad in following him. This short hint points out the true internal evidence of Moses's divine legation; and this evidence has no sort of dependence upon the belief or disbelief of the doctrine of a future state; for supposing (what the truth is) that the Israelites did believe it, what could this belief effect? it might carry them to heaven, and would do so, if they made a proper use of it; but it could not put them in possession of the land of Canaan; in respect of which it could make no difference whether they had the doctrine of a future state or had it not.

## POSTSCRIPT.

One use which Mr. W. proposed from his account of the case of Abraham was to shew the dependency between the two dispensations, that under the Old Testament, and this under the New. As to which



which (having admitted that the transaction in question was typical of the sacrifice of Christ) I said, that it would have “the same efficacy to shew this dependency, whether Abraham had thereby any information of the sacrifice of Christ or not; for that this does not arise from Abraham’s knowledge, or any body’s knowledge, at the time when the transaction happened, but from the similitude and correspondency between the event and the transaction by which it is prefigured, which is exactly the same upon either supposition.” Mr. W. does not like this account; but where is the fault? why, granting in the first place, that “the dependency between the two dispensations does NOT arise from Abraham’s knowledge, &c.” he tells me, that it arises “from God’s INTENTION that this commanded action should import, or represent the sacrifice of Christ\*.” Agreed. But to whom is this intention to be made out? why to unbelievers; for it is for their conviction that he is to shew the harmony between both dispensations in

\* Rem. p. 94.



in this transaction, which he calls "the noblest instance of it that ever was given."

Very good : but how will he prove to an unbeliever, that it was God's intention that this transaction should import or represent the sacrifice of Christ ? I would send him to the similitude and correspondence between this transaction and the event, as now opened to us by Christ's death ; no, says Mr. W. " a similitude and correspondence between the event and the transaction which prefigured it, is not enough to shew this dependency to the satisfaction of unbelievers ; who say that a likeness between two things of the same nature, such as offering up two men to death, though in different ways, and transacted in two very distant periods, is not sufficient to shew that they had any relation to one another : with the same reason they will say, you might pretend that Jephthah's daughter, or the king of Moab's son, whom the father sacrificed on the wall, were the types of Christ's sacrifice : give us, say they, a Bible Proof, that God declared or revealed his intention of prefiguring the death of Jesus, or  
some



some better authority at least, than a modern typifier, who deals only in similitudes and correspondencies \*." I am by this time so well acquainted with the gentleman's way of talking, that I make no scruple to suppose, that what he here puts into the mouth of an unbeliever, is really his own opinion; and so much the rather, because I find him a little after delivering it as his own sense, that "seers by resemblance into facts, are like the seers by second-sight into futurity;" whom doubtless we are to understand to be a ridiculous sort of fellows.

Whether the command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, and what followed upon it, were intended by Providence to typify or prefigure the sacrifice of Christ, I will have no dispute with Mr. W. I gave it as the common opinion that it was so intended; and if this is right, it will shew a dependency between the two dispensations; if it is wrong, this dependency may very sufficiently be shewn without it: but as the gentleman's ridicule, upon similitudes

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\* Rem. p. 95.



tudes and correspondencies between transactions under the Old Testament and events under the New, extends to all cases of a like sort, it will be very fit to take this matter under consideration; especially as he has made himself accountable for it, by what he hath written upon types and secondary senses in prophecies, in his Div. Leg. book 6 sect. 6. which he now boasts of as a very Extraordinary performance†. I shall not contest with him his merit, provided we can but agree in our sentiments; though to speak the truth, abating for something in the dress and garb, the doctrine of types was as well understood before he wrote his book as it has been since.

The great point which he undertakes to support against unbelievers is, that “a type is neither visionary nor senseless,” as they pretend, but “a rational mode of information.” Div. Leg. p. 625, 631. In this we are agreed; but the points will be, what information it conveys, and how it conveys it? information may be considered

† Rem. p. 135.



sidered either as respecting the present time, when the type is given forth, or as respecting the future time, when the type has received its accomplishment. In the first respect the information must be, that God will hereafter do such or such a thing; in the second it must be, that such or such a thing (actually come to pass) was foreseen and foreordained of God. Thus in the case of Abraham's offering up his son, supposing it to have been a type of the sacrifice of Christ, the information conveyed by it to those under the Old Testament (if any was conveyed) could only have been this, that Christ should be offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world; and to those under the New Testament it must be this, that from the days of Abraham it had been foreappointed or foreordained of God, that Christ should be offered up as a sacrifice. It is with this last kind of information that we are concerned at present; as what alone can be of use in our disputes with unbelievers, who must confess a dependency between the two dispensations, if what was done under the one was foreshewed by the other.



Types have the nature of prophecy, with this difference only, that what prophecy foreshews by words, that types foreshew by signs or symbols; and every prophecy under the Old Testament accomplished under the New is evidence of the divinity of both religions, as it discovers one and the same author of both, which author must be that Being who hath in himself the knowledge of futurity, and to whom things that are to be appear as if they were. To this doctrine I have Mr. W. consenting, Div. Leg. p. 623. where he says, that “while [Christians] reason on the principle of dependency, their reasonings will not only be just and logical, but every solution on such a principle will, besides its determination on the particular point in question, be a new proof of the divinity of both in general; because such a relation, connection and dependency between two religions of so distant periods, could not possibly come about but by divine prevision.”

All this is very right; but I suppose, that in order to support this just and logical reasoning, it will be incumbent upon

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us to shew how this information is conveyed, or upon what grounds we affirm, that such or such transactions under the Old Testament were intended to foreshew such or such events under the New. Mr. W. has confessed it; for he says, as you have seen above, in respect of the case of Abraham, that the force of this transaction to shew the dependency, &c. “arises from God’s Intention, that this commanded action should import or represent the sacrifice of Christ.” What is true of this case is as true of all others of a like sort: for be it ever so sure, that God’s foreappointing under the Old Testament certain things to be done under the New, is evidence of the mutual dependency of both dispensations, and shews the divine authority of both; yet, unless you prove the intention of God, that such or such transactions should prefigure such or such events, you can never prove the foreappointment, and so the whole force of this sort of reasoning will be destroyed.

This therefore is a point which one might reasonably have expected that Mr. W. in his laboured dissertation before-



mentioned, should have taken particular care to have explained to the satisfaction of his readers ; but I have been looking it over from the beginning to the end, and to my great disappointment, I find not one word about it, but just a hint or two, dropped as it were by chance, of which I shall take notice by and by : so that after all his cavalier treatment of unbelievers upon this argument, he has in reality done no execution against them, but left them in possession of the field.

But to make good this defect, he now tells us what proof is requisite to shew God's intention in such cases. We are not to compare types with events : this with him, is no better than second sight ; he must have "Bible Proof that God declared or revealed his intention of prefiguring, &c." What does he mean by Bible Proof ? the Bible comprehends both Testaments ; would he have proofs from the New Testament, that such or such transactions under the Old Testament were intended to prefigure such or such things under the New ? this will not do : this is not the Bible Proof that unbelievers want ;  
nor



nor are they bound to accept it: the authority of the writers of the New Testament as inspired men is, with them, the main point in question; and if you want the New Testament authority to ascertain the type, you cannot bring back the type again as evidence for that authority. This is against all the rules of reasoning in the world: and yet it seems as if this was a way of ascertaining the sense of types, which Mr. W. would be willing to trust to; for speaking of secondary prophecies, which have the nature of types, he says that “some of these by their proper light alone, Without Miracles In Their Confirmation, could hardly have the sense contended for Well Ascertained.” Div. Leg. p. 657. which seems to be allowing, that by miracles, i. e. by the authority of men vouching their divine inspiration by miracles, the sense contended for may be ascertained. To the same purpose, p. 651. where speaking of the same kind of prophecies, he says,—“I confess, that without miracles in confirmation of such sense, some of them would difficultly be proved to have it—but let me add—that the Au-



thority of superior wisdom as rationally determines the assent to the meaning of a doubtful proposition, as any other kind of logical evidence whatsoever." If Mr. W. does not mean to serve himself with these general principles, to ascertain the sense of types, he has then, I say, left us no rule at all; but in fact, he hath made use of this way of reasoning in the very argument under consideration. Abraham, he tells us, had information of the sacrifice of Christ by the sacrifice of his son; and this he brings as evidence to unbelievers, to shew the dependency between the two dispensations: but how does it appear that Abraham had information of Christ's sacrifice by the sacrifice of his son? why from passages in the New Testament; for the Old Testament is quite silent about it. The argument proceeds thus:—our Saviour says, that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, &c.—If he did see Christ's day, he saw it in this transaction, for he could see it in no where else. Again, the apostle says, that Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure, meaning that Isaac was the representative of Christ rising from



from the dead ; therefore Abraham saw Christ's resurrection : but does not every one see that these arguments take for granted what unbelievers universally deny, that the testimony of Christ and his apostles is the testimony of men divinely inspired ? they are therefore a mere *petitio principii*, and so are all arguments used for the conviction of unbelievers, which borrow aid from the authority of the New Testament to ascertain the sense of types or prophecies under the Old.

Since then this sort of BIBLE PROOF will not do, we must go to the next, and say, that unless it be plainly declared in THE OLD Testament, that such or such transactions were INTENDED to typify or prefigure something under the New, there will be no proof of the dependency between the two dispensations from such (supposed) types or figures. This truly represents the sense of unbelievers ; and if this is Mr. W's meaning too, there will be a full end of all typical evidence ; for there is no SUCH Bible Proof to be found ; and Mr. W. very well knows, that in the nature of the thing no such proof there could be.

For



For speaking of types and secondary senses of prophecies, and the manner in which notice by them must be given, he says, and he says rightly, that “the nature of the thing informs us it could not be directly and openly, so as to be understood by the people at the time of giving; because this would have defeated God’s intermediate purpose, which was to train them up by a long discipline under his preparatory dispensation.” Div. Leg. p. 633. In other words, it would have been opening to the then present age those points relating to the future dispensation, which it was the intention of providence to conceal till the age of that dispensation should come. I am not disposed to part with this sort of evidence upon such easy terms as Mr. W. seems willing to part with it; but, in support of what I have said, and what I believe to be the truth, do maintain, that the proper and ONLY way of ascertaining the sense of ancient types, so as to make them evidences to unbelievers, is the very method which he rejects and ridicules, viz. the comparing transactions with events, and observing the  
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similitude and correspondency between them. Mr. W. in respect of the case of Abraham, says, that if we judge by similitudes and correspondencies, “we may as well pretend that Jephtha’s daughter, or the king of Moab’s son, whom the father sacrificed on the wall, were the types of Christ’s sacrifice,” as that Abraham’s offering up his son was a type of Christ’s sacrifice. His instances are certainly very unfortunate ; for that act which shews the intention of God must be some act of God ; such was the command to Abraham to offer up his son ; such was not the act of the king of Moab in sacrificing his son ; such was not the act of Jephthah in sacrificing his daughter, supposing he did sacrifice her ; which wants proof. But as to this case of Abraham, whether it was or was not a type of Christ, as I said before, it little concerns me ; nor is it my business at present to settle all the types in the Old Testament : but to the general point, I say, that a correspondency between the type and the event, under proper circumstances, is enough to shew the intention of God ; and that types understood by their accomplishment, are in their rank and order, a  
ra-



rational evidence of the truth of both religions. The circumstances are these.

1. That the two religions have otherwise the proper marks of a divine revelation.
2. That it appears from the nature and constitution of the first religion, that it was intended as preparatory to and prophetic of the second. These circumstances concurring (and they both concur in the Jewish and Christian dispensation) when you see in the several appointments under the first, a plain and manifest resemblance to what happened under the second, it yields a Strong Probability, that this did not happen by chance, but was Purposely so contrived, that future ages might see and be convinced by this, as well as by other proofs, that there was one and the same design running through them both; and that the religion of Jesus Christ was but the accomplishment of what, for ages before, the wisdom of God had appointed to be done. I call this a strong probability. I go no farther; for the evidence from types is far inferior in kind to that arising from miracles, and plain scripture prophecies. But evidence it is in its rank and order, suited to establish the truth of the



the Christian religion ; as a house is supported not by the principal posts only, but by every stud, beam or brace, which helps to make the whole fabrick compact.

Try now the case of Abraham, and see if it may not put in for a just claim to be considered as a type of Christ's sacrifice. That Christ was offered up as a sacrifice, we desire may be admitted upon the evidence of Christ's sacrifice : look into the Old Testament, and what do you find ? why, the very heir of the promises, the first-born of the covenant from whom the redemption was to come, Himself offered up as a sacrifice ; and this by the command and appointment of God. Is not there a great difference between this and the case of the king of Moab's son, and of Jephthah's daughter, which this writer ridiculously places in comparison with it ? Is this no better than second sight ? or does it not look every one in the face that reads it, as bespeaking something more to have been intended by this transaction, than merely to try Abraham's faith ? Mr. W. is pleased to admit that " the periodic sacrifice of a Lamb without blemish was



a type of Christ." Div. Leg. p. 629. Where is his Bible Proof for this ; such bible proof, I mean, as unbelievers demand ? or if we are to judge by correspondencies and similitudes, as we must or not at all, what stronger circumstances are there in the sacrifice of the Lamb, to point out the sacrifice of Christ, than there is in the sacrifice of Isaac ? but these and all other types of like sort speak to Us only who live under this last dispensation, for whose instruction alone they were intended : Abraham could not collect merely from his being commanded to sacrifice his son, that Christ was to be sacrificed ; nor could the Jews collect it from the sacrifice of the Lamb : but we, who can compare the type with the antitype, do plainly see it, not, I confess, in the light of DEMONSTRATION, but, in the light of HIGH PROBABILITY ; and in all this the argument borrows no force from the authority of the writers of the New Testament considered as inspired men, to whom we appeal, as to common historians, only for facts, and then reason from those facts as in other cases.





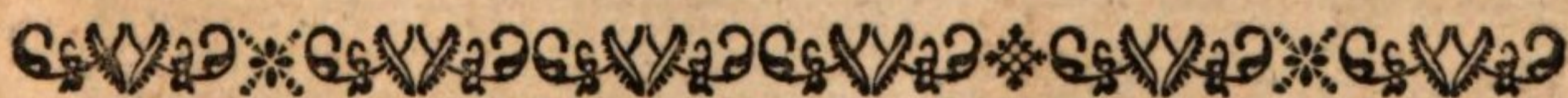
A LETTER to the DEAN of  
BRISTOL; occasioned by his  
new Edition of the second Volume  
of his Divine Legation of MOSES.

LUKE xiv. 28, 29, 30.

*Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down  
first and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to  
finish it ?*

*Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able  
to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying,  
This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

Published in the Year 1759.











TO THE  
DEAN  
OF  
BRISTOL.

MR. DEAN,

PON the publication of a new edition of your Divine Legation, I was naturally led to look into it, to see if your after-reflections had thrown any new light upon the subject, which some years ago was a matter of contest between us: not with intention to revive old disputes, but with a desire to correct my former judgment, if in any material instance I should find myself convicted of error: but though I make no inconsiderable figure in those marginal

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notes, by which you have swelled the bulk, and encreased the price of your book, I have not been able to discover any thing of that sort, but see a great deal of something else which would much better have been spared.

The point upon which we at first set out was a question of fact; whether the people of the Jews before the captivity, or thereabouts, were or were not acquainted with the doctrine of a future state. You had maintained the negative; and from hence undertaken to raise an internal proof, Demonstration you are pleased to call it, that the Jews were under an extraordinary providence, and that Moses's legation was divine. There is nothing new in the notion; but this Use is your own, and would have been acceptable to believers, if it had ground to stand upon: but your principle appeared to me to be false, and being fully convinced that arguments built upon false principles, if they do no hurt, which generally they do, can add no real strength to Christianity, I therefore opposed it, in a † pamphlet published in the year 1744, in

† An Examination of Mr. Warburton's second Proposition, &c.



in which I endeavoured to prove from both the Old and New Testament, that the doctrine of a future state was the constant belief of the people of God from the beginning, through every age or period of the Jewish church. You never thought fit to enter into a regular confutation of this book, but shuffled it off as well as you could by scurrilous abusive papers; and whoever will examine this new edition, and see how little you have now done towards invalidating any part of my argument, or establishing your own, he will perhaps be of opinion, that this point has been driven as far as it will go; and that it will much better become us both to sit down, each contented with his own notions, than to trouble the world with altercations, which can produce no good effect. To this issue I am willing to trust.

But there is one point well worth attention, which has not yet been debated, and which shall be the subject of this letter: the point I mean is, whether supposing it could be made out that the people of the Jews knew nothing of a future state, your argument from thence is worth



the stir you have made about it; and whether you have not neglected a true, and the principal, internal proof of Moses's mission to follow a phantom of your own raising. As this question affects not your Principle, but its Use, it will be much more properly spoken to now, than when I was examining the principle itself. Yet I gave you a hint of it at the close of that debate; in answer to which you now tell me, in your civil way, that "I only shew my ignorance of what is meant by an INTERNAL argument," † which, you say, "is such a one as takes for its medium some NOTORIOUS Fact ALLOWED even by unbelievers." We are much beholden to you, that you will at last tell us what you mean by an internal argument: I find nothing of it Vol. 1. B. 1. Sect. 1. where it would most properly have been placed. The reason perhaps may be, that if you had said this at your first setting out it would have discredited your whole performance. For is it a Fact NOTORIOUS and allowed even by unbelievers, that the Jews knew nothing

† D. L. Vol. 2. Par. 2. p. 136.



nothing of a future state? It is more than I know.—But if it is; to what purpose was it to take so much pains to prove it? for whose use was that laboured uphill work, which takes up so much room in your second volume, intended? for believers? they want it not; they thank you not; for unbelievers? they are in possession, you say, of the very point you would prove! But how came a man of your discernment, Mr. Dean, to fall into so weak a mistake as to think that internal evidence takes its denomination from its being raised upon a fact or facts acknowledged by the opposers themselves? what has this circumstance to do with the nature of evidence whether internal or external? it may be of some use to stop the mouth of an opposer to say, you have granted this or that; for in all matters of contest, a man's own concession lays hold of his modesty, and will be a check upon him not to contradict a verdict given by himself; but whether this be the effect or not, the evidence both in kind and nature will be same. Let us then lay aside this trifling, and try if we can fix upon



some intelligible notion of external and internal proof, that we may know what it is that we are talking about; and in order to it I lay down the following propositions.

1. Ancient facts are known by historical evidence; that is by the testimony of the historian who records them; supposing him duly qualified to be an evidence.

2. To qualify a man to be an evidence it is necessary that he be a person of veracity, and that he himself be competently instructed in the matters about which he writes.

3. In order to such competent instruction it is necessary, either that he himself had personal knowledge of the facts he records, or that he received them elsewhere upon such evidence as might be depended upon. In the first of which cases he is an original, in the latter a secondary witness; which, in many cases, may be equivalent.

4. Under these circumstances all ancient histories demand credit, provided we are assured that they are really ancient histories,



ries, and not modern forgeries; the proper evidence of which is the concurrent testimony of ages, accepting and admitting such records as true and genuine from the very time in which they were written.

All these circumstances concur to support the authority of Moses's history, and of many other histories; and these being extraneous to the facts recorded, are what we call the external proof. But there is in all histories something inherent in the facts themselves, which will make them more or less credible; and from hence arises what we call the internal evidence. If an historian relates things in the nature of them impossible or absurd, nobody will believe him, how well soever such history may, in appearance, externally be supported; for it will be presumed, as it ought to be presumed, that there is some defect in the external evidence, though we may not be able to discover where it lies. The case will be the same if an historian reports inconsistent facts, or things which do not well hang together, for in truth there must be consistency:

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but



but on the contrary when a history contains nothing impossible or absurd, and such an harmony and uniformity runs through the whole as gives it, what we call an air of credibility, we readily embrace it, and more or less strongly we embrace it, in proportion as this air of credibility is greater or less. But why do we embrace it? not merely on the account of this uniformity, but because it is an uniform, consistent history, Properly Supported by external testimony: that is to say; this uniformity is not, strictly, Evidence of the truth of the facts, but prepares the mind to receive the evidence under the greater advantage. It is this that distinguishes history from romance: the writer of a novel, if he understands his business, will avoid absurdities, and see that the several parts of his tale hang well together; but nobody therefore believes it to be true; because it wants the support of external testimony, which the writer cannot give nor pretends to give.

If this be not the true nature of external and internal proof, I do then freely confess that I know not what they mean:

but



but this admitted, it will appear that the internal evidence pre-supposes the external as its foundation, and cannot subsist without it.

And now, Sir, if you please, to the matter in hand.

You say that the ignorance of a future state among the Jews is an internal, demonstrative proof of Moses's Divine Legation, or that the Jews were under an extraordinary Providence. In order to support this argument, these things at least are necessarily pre-supposed, viz. — that Moses was the legislator of the Jews; and—that the Jews were ignorant of a future state. But these facts must be known by history; which spoils you for a demonstrator at once: for historical evidence goes no farther than probability; and if this must concur to make up the evidence, it cannot be a demonstration; for demonstration cannot stand upon probability; this is impossible, the evidence may be good and sufficient, but DEMONSTRATION it cannot be; which is always founded upon self-evident truths, and is carried on by a chain or series of the most simple ideas  
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hanging upon each other by a necessary connexion.

But not to insist rigorously upon the meaning of words, I will be content, if from the ignorance of a future state among the Jews, which, for argument sake, is now granted you, you can form a better argument for Moses's Divine Legation, than we have without it. Your argument stands thus——The belief of a future state, in the ordinary course of things, is necessary to support government——the Jews did not believe a future state, and yet were under government.—Therefore they were under an extraordinary Providence. But do you not see that your argument entirely throws out (that is, omits) the CONCURRENCE OF HISTORY, which, as appears by the observations just now laid down, is an essential defect? the history, no doubt, was in your head; but it should have been in your argument too, or it comes to nothing. Let it be supposed that we knew nothing more of the Jews and their government under Moses than this, that they did not believe a future state; would you immediately have inferred

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red from hence that Judea was a land of miracles? you have inferred it, but, in my opinion, very unsafely; for (to omit at present other reasons) though it is certain that the belief of a future state is so highly useful to government, that, in a qualified sense, it may be termed Necessary, yet I do not see such a close connexion between the idea of such belief and the idea of government, as to think that the latter absolutely and inseparably involves the former. There is government among bands of thieves and pirates, who, if they believe a future state, make no use of it: and though it may be hard to conceive how nations can subsist (or at least long subsist) without such a belief, yet I will not go so far as to say that the thing is in the very notion of it naturally Impossible. But if authentick history tells you of a nation that did not believe a future state, and the same (or any other good) history informs you they were under an extraordinary Providence, it may then be said that the history is thus far consistent and uniform, and you may lay any weight upon this uniformity, in aid of the history, that it will in reason bear.

There



There is a person who did you much honour (which you have ill repaid) at your first setting out upon this subject, who would have instructed you better in the manner of forming your argument, if you had attended to him ; I mean Dr. Sherlock, the present bishop of London ; who, in his Dissertation on Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, from this circumstance in the law of Moses that the Jews were forbidden to use horses and chariots in war, raises an argument to shew that it was from God. I have often thought with myself, that this gave you the first hint to attempt the like from the ignorance of the Jews concerning a future state ; but if this is true, you have shewn yourself but a bad copyist from a very great master. For how does He form his argument ? Thus—" the law given to the kings of Israel, CONSIDERED TOGETHER WITH THE HISTORY of that nation, form a very strong presumption for the divine original of the law of Moses. \* " You see here that his lordship has taken care of the essential point, which you have

\* Dissert. 4. p. 24 1st Edit. 1732.



have neglected, the CONCURRENCE OF THE HISTORY with the law ; and from both together raises his proof ; which he does not call DEMONSTRATION but PRESUMPTION. And he had reason to call it so ; for certainly if Moses was raised up to carry the Israelites out of Egypt into the land of Canaan ; to dispossess nations *greater and mightier than they*,\* and place them in their stead ; and if it be true that they did, under the conduct of this their leader, or his successor, dispossess these nations, notwithstanding that they were forbidden the natural and necessary means of defence ; if, I say, this be true, it will follow that the hand of God was in this thing : but this must Appear by the Evidence, which is the Authority of the history declaring both the fact and the divine power by which it was effected ; which creates a consistency and correspondence that gives credit to the history ; and without which nothing will arise but this alternative, Either that Moses had the assistance of an extraordinary Providence, Or that the history is  
Not

\* Deut. 4. 38.



Not True ; and upon this foot I believe there is not a man of common sense who would not chuse the latter.

This argument may be stated in a general way ; and in this light it stands in the hint I gave you at the close of our debate. My words are these :

“ What was it that Moses undertook and what was the true end of his mission ? it was to carry the children of Israel out of Egypt and put them in possession of the land of Canaan, in execution of the covenant made with Abraham. The work in the very nature of it Required the administration of an extraordinary providence, of which it ought therefore to be presumed that Moses had the assurance and experience, otherwise he would have engaged in a very mad undertaking, and the people would have been as mad in following him.” I have not here mentioned the law forbidding the use of chariots and horses ; nor ought the argument to be confined to it ; it extends to all cases of a like sort, and if you take the whole history of Moses from his calling the Israel-  
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ites to their settlement in Canaan, you will find a variety of transactions which, natural means only considered, appear to be absurd or impossible; and which, consequently, by the same right that you claim in your argument, will stand as so many internal proofs of Moses's divine mission. But this argument, you say, is "a counterfeit piece of trumpery, and so far from being an internal argument that it is no argument at all." In points of mere reasoning it is scarce allowable to call in authorities, unless it be to shame those who obstinately hold out against conviction; but upon this occasion I cannot help telling you that there is One author at least, who vouches for this argument: the authority you cannot except against; for it is Your Own. The passage lies at present close in a corner where it has little to do; but I will set it, as it is fit, in open day-light.

In the first part of this second volume you attack Sir ISAAC NEWTON, upon the point of the high antiquity of Egypt. In the management of this argument you  
was



was led to take Notice of that very law of Moses, by which the Israelites were forbidden the use of horses and chariots in war; and, as it is much your custom to catch at every new scent, whether to your purpose or not, you undertake to assign the reasons of this law. Of three that you have assigned I shall take notice only of the last, which runs in these words.

“ The third reason of the prohibition was evidently to afford a Lasting Manifestation of that Extraordinary providence, by which the Israelites were conducted into the land of Canaan.—When once settled they might very well defend their possession without the help of cavalry. But to conquer it without cavalry, and from a war-like people abounding in horse, Was More Than a Raw Unpractised Infantry Could Ever Have Performed Alone.” And a little after—“ The invaders of a country where cavalry is in use, go to certain destruction, without a body of horse to support their infantry. This then being the very situation of affairs when the Israelites invaded Canaan and conquered it.—I Conclude



clude that they Must Have Been Miraculously Assisted."\* Shew me a difference, Mr. Dean, between the two arguments, or tell me how it comes to pass that the same argument which was so good in your hands, should be such trumpery in mine. What new light, or rather darkness, has broken in upon you to set the second part of your work at variance with the first? the account of this must be something very curious, and the reader shall have it from yourself.

One reason then why you cannot accept my, i. e. your own argument, it seems is this, that "it will serve the Mufti full as well to prove the divine legation of Mahomet."—very well, Mr. Dean! and was it not as easy for you to have seen this before as to see it now?—But let us hear you out—"for thus we may suppose he, the Mufti, would argue—Mahomet's work was not like Moses's, the subdual of a small tract of country, possessed by seven tribes or nations, with a force of some hundred thousand followers; but the conquest of

R r almost

\*D. L. Vol. 2. Part. 1. pag. 291, &c. new edition.



almost all Asia with a handful of banditti. Now this work, says the learned Mahometan, in the very nature of it required the administration of an extraordinary providence, of which it ought therefore to be presumed that Mahomet had both the assurance and experience, otherwise he would have engaged in a very mad undertaking, and the people would have been as mad in following him. Thus has the learned doctor taught the Mufti how to reason." Set the saddle upon the right horse, Mr. Dean : this phantom which you have conjured up must be understood as speaking *your* sense and not *mine*. But consider a little ; is there no difference between these two cases ? whilst you was commenting upon the law against chariots and horses you could see a very plain one, and have distinctly marked it out ; for you say, and very truly, that "Mahomet never pretended to make his conquests without horse, but used them on every occasion of need." This is to the point, Sir ; and if ever you should chance to meet the Mufti, which you are much more likely to do than I am, pray tell him This, and it will  
cure



cure him of his haranguing at once. But by all means conceal from him, with a religious secrecy, what you have published here with so little ceremony, viz. that “Mahomet’s work was not like Moses’s, the subdual of a small tract of country—with a force of some hundred thousand followers, but the conquest of almost All Asia with a handful of banditti;” for this will be understood as a concession, perhaps, that Mahomet had even Greater pretensions to a divine legation than Moses : for thus the construction lies---Mahomet did a greater work than Moses with less natural help.---If it is not this, it is nothing ; if it is this, it is a monstrous fallacy. Let us state the fact as it is : Mahomet set out with a small force, which by degrees (as is not uncommon) grew up to a prodigious army ; with which he conquered Asia. This is what you have made your Mufti call conquering Asia *with a bandfull of banditti* ! Be they what you will please to call them, still it is clear that Mahomet did his work by the natural and ordinary methods of conquest ; by armies of horse and foot. Did Moses do so too ? prove



this, and you will conquer me and yourself too; for you have said that he had them Not, and that without a miraculous assistance the conquest of Canaan would have been impossible. With what consistency then could you put it into the mouth of your Mahometan to say, that Mahomet's work, in the very nature of it, required the administration of an extraordinary providence? the nature of every work is to be estimated by the circumstances that attend it; Moses's work was so circumstanced, that without an extraordinary providence he could not have effected it; Mahomet's so, that without an extraordinary providence he might and did effect it!

II. Another reason why you cannot accept my argument is, "because you proposed to Prove, not to Presume upon, the divinity of Moses's mission."—What an unreasonable man are you, Mr. Dean! would you have more of a thing than is in it? I say that the circumstances under which the Israelites were, is a presumption that Moses had an extraordinary assistance; and so it is: but am I therefore to be charged with leaving the whole weight  
of



of Moses's authority to rest upon presumption? absurd! the presumption refers to the history and, the circumstance from whence it arises falling in with the history, they mutually confirm and strengthen each other, and make the evidence full and compleat: the nature of the work leads you to expect a miraculous assistance, and the history shews it you.

Enough has been said upon this argument: and now, Mr. Dean, it may be time to weigh the value of yours, which is an argument of the same kind, and concludes exactly in the same way. I consider the work of Moses in general as above the power of natural means, and from thence conclude that he had supernatural assistance; You consider the doctrine of a future state as a natural means, and from the want of it draw the same conclusion. What now is your boasted Demonstration come to? why to a presumptive proof only, and that, in its force, inferior to the other; for it is not at least so clear a point, that the belief of a future state is essential to government, as it is that horses and chariots are necessary in war; or if it were



as clear, and nothing had been recorded concerning an extraordinary providence, I should have been as much at liberty to deny the truth of the history, as you are to infer Moses's divine legation. It may further be observed in disparagement of your argument, that the premises and the conclusion do not tally well together ; for the conclusion should have been, not simply, that the Jews were under an extraordinary providence, but, that they were under Such an extraordinary providence as fully supplied the want of a future state, i. e. a providence Exactly Equal : but such a providence never subsisted in this world nor ever can subsist, the constitution of things remaining the same.—But take it as you like best, and let it be said that you have gained one congruity, one correspondency, to be added to the many that the history may justly challenge ; how much are you a gainer by it ? rate the advantage as high as you please, it can never compensate for introducing or patronizing an opinion, which gives such an account of God's conduct in relation to his chosen people, as will not stand with common sense. This was urged  
upon



upon you in my examination, and has been fully supported in my defence of it; of which you take no notice. That I may not seem singular in this opinion, I will give you the sense of an able divine of our church, who says—"Some have carried the point so high, as to make the promises and expectations of a future happy state peculiar to the Gospel; thus excluding all before and under the law, from any revelation or belief of that kind. But this is doubtless a very Erroneous and Dangerous doctrine, highly injurious to the goodness and wisdom of God, a great indignity to the Mosaical dispensation, altogether inconsistent with the whole tenor and design of the Old, as we find it interpreted and confirmed by the New Testament." Dean Stanhope's Boyle's Lectur. Serm. 6.

This gentleman may perhaps be too orthodox for you, and will be turned aside among the croud of bigots; for, according to the fashion of the age, orthodoxy is a standing jest with you, and all are bigots who are not of your opinion.

*Homine imperito nunquam quidquam injustius!*



But I will name you a man who certainly was not over orthodox ; I mean your old friend and intimate Dr. Middleton, who, acquiescing in your principle that the ancient Jews knew nothing of a future state, saw, or thought he saw, that, in it's consequence, it destroyed the foundation of all religion among that people, and rather than accept your argument chose to mark out Moses for a fool, \* as you might have done

\* “ I should be glad to hear that your great work goes on successfully. — When I was last in London I met with a little piece, written — on the same plan with yours, an anonymous letter from Geneva evincing the divine mission of Moses from the institution of the sabbatic year. The author sets out, like you, from this single postulatam, that Moses was a consummate law-giver ; and shews that he could never have enjoined a law, so whimsical, impolitick, and hazardous — if he, who has all nature at command, had not warranted the success of it — But will not this gaiety of censuring the law be found too adventurous — especially when there is a fact generally allowed by the learned, that seems to overturn all this specious reasoning at once, viz. that this law of the sabbatic year was never observed ; for if so it may be objected with some shew of reason, that Moses had charged himself with the issue of events Too Delicate And Beyond His Reach, and Imprudently enjoined what use and experience shewed to be Impracticable. I am apprehensive likewise



done for any good reason you have given to the contrary. You may tell us as often as you please that it was contrived to do honour to Moses's Legation; and I shall as readily believe you, as if you should say it was contrived for your honour that you might have the opportunity of raising a Demonstration which no body ever saw before you nor will be able to see after you.

How is it then, I ask again, that you are serving religion? why just as a physician

wise that your work will not stand wholly clear of objections. Your scheme, as I take it, is to shew that so able a man as Moses could not possibly have omitted the doctrine of a future state—had he not done it by the express direction of the Deity. But what was the consequence? why the people were perpetually apostatizing—and tired with the load of their ceremonies—sunk into all kinds of vice and prophaneness; till the prophets, in order to revive—a sense of Religion—began to preach up the rational duties of religion and insinuate the doctrine of a future state.

“As in the other case then some may be apt to say that Moses had instituted what could not be practised without ruin to the State; so in this, that he had overlooked, what Could Not Be Omitted, Without Ruin to Religion.” Middleton's Miscellaneous Tracts. Vol. I. Letter to Warburton. I.



cian is serving his patient, who, in order to remove a pain in his toe, applies such remedies as will drive the distemper into his brain! but this difficulty is clearly avoided by the old exposition; which gives to the people of Israel, both an extraordinary Providence and the knowledge of a future state, (and surely! they are both consistent) the one as the principal and adequate foundation of their religion, and the other as the cement of their civil polity, and the instrument of putting them in possession of the land of Canaan, and keeping them together as a people separated from the rest of the nations, till the time fore-ordained in God's wisdom for the gathering together all nations into one people under Christ the Redeemer should come. This is the OLD doctrine which runs through both testaments, and which is supported by the articles and homilies of our Church; as I have largely proved in my Examination, by arguments which you have thought fit to neglect, and which I shall not repeat: nor had I said thus much but to give to every

every



every intelligent reader, a short and clear account of the true state and merits of this question ; and to shew how much the interest of religion is concerned in it.

MY LORD,

The foregoing letter was written to you from Bath about two years ago. It is now fit that I alter my style in what I have farther to say to you, which will be very short. It is an old challenge of your Lordship's to me, that I would "acquit myself of my intentions before the publick in writing against You." Your plea is that you wrote Professedly in the defence of Christianity, and that it would better have bespoke "a real regard for the interests of Religion to have left it to some unthinking unbelieving scribler to expose the weakness of your discourse." My answer to this challenge is almost as old as the objection ; and I think I can do nothing so proper to close the account between us, as to repeat it.

"If your argument had been ONLY Weak, I should not have meddled with it ;  
but



but when it was set up in Disparagement of the proper methods of defence; when concessions were made to unbelievers, that will not stand with a just defence of Christianity, and which in reason and good sense ought not to be made; in one word, when the defence of Religion was removed from a foundation that WILL support it, and placed upon another that will NOT support it; let the world judge What a real concern for the interests of religion directs to in such a case, and Who it is that is to be charged with taking the work of unbelievers out of their hands; I who have been only taking those weapons from you, that can do no execution against unbelievers, but rather assist them; or You, who have been battering those fortresses, which have even been the Mark of unbelievers, and which if they could be overthrown, Christianity would stand exposed to their triumphs."

But this, my Lord, is YOUR SPIRIT! you are not contented to vanquish an enemy, unless you can \* stab him with his

\* See Pref. to the 2d vol. of Div. Leg. p. 9. 2d Edit.



his own sword; which in other cases would be thought a great instance of ill conduct; and, if I am not much mistaken, you have found it so in this; and that, the interest of religion considered, you had better have rested in the old method of defence, than strained your invention to find out a new one.

I am,

Your Lordship's, &c.

LONDON,  
June 2, 1761.

HENRY STEBBING.

F I N I S.









































Stebbing, Henry,

A Collection Of Tracts, Published Between the Years 1729 and 1759, In The  
Defence and Explanation Of Christianity and its Evidence

London 1766

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